The qualities of primary art teachers
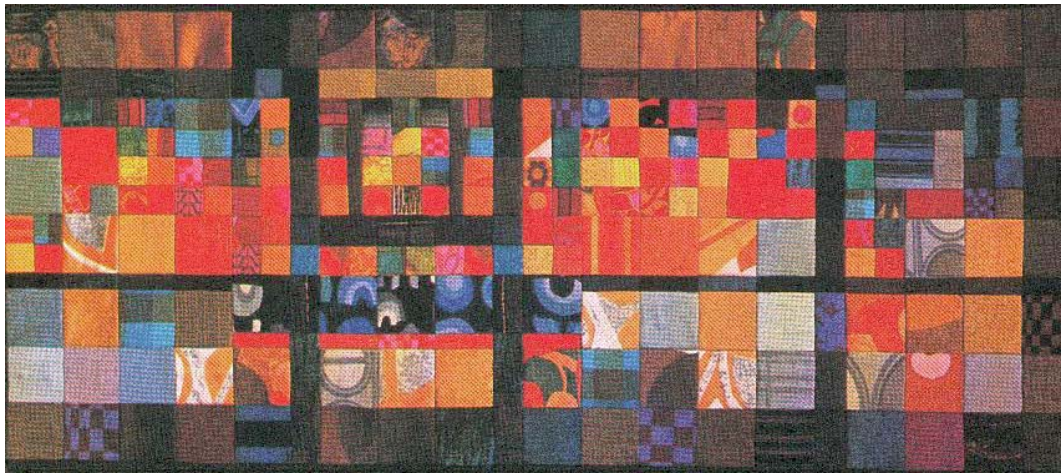
By

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The need for warmth led to the padding and layering of fabrics, just as the need to utilize fabric scraps led to piecing and patchwork. The necessity for durability produced careful and strong stitching. But it was the desire to add beauty to everyday articles that led to the use of carefully arranged and selected mosaics of coloured fabric.
(Laury 1970: 8)

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Technology, Sydney.

March 2002

I certify that this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged in within the text.

I also certify that this thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of candidate: _____

Secondly, the wonderful group of twenty-two accomplished art teachers who gladly joined this research journey and have become colleagues and friends. I wish to particularly thank them for the time they dedicated to this research and their generosity of spirit in letting me share their thoughts and visit their classrooms.

Thirdly, my supervisor Professor David Boud, Faculty of Education, University of Technology, Sydney and co-supervisor Dr Ian Brown, Art Education, University of Wollongong for their mentorship and guidance throughout the project. The research conversations shared were greatly appreciated for the humour, friendship and critique they provided.

I would also like to thank the staff of the University of Technology, Sydney for their encouragement and practical assistance throughout this research.

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In memory of

Dr Donald Samuel Levis (Dad)

and

Mrs Vera May Wagner (Nanna)

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ABSTRACT:

This study aimed to determine the qualities of beliefs and practices apparent in a group of accomplished primary art teachers to ascertain if these may be used to inform and improve design and practice in preservice primary art teacher education programs within Australia.

The participants in this study were twenty-two accomplished primary art teachers who possessed a recognised ability to successfully teach primary visual arts and who included specialist and generalist primary art teachers. Teachers were designated 'specialists' if they taught art across the school. If they taught across disciplines within the primary curriculum and taught a single class they were referred to as 'generalist teachers.' Primary school is the place in which Australian children aged four and twelve years old receive their education.

The accomplished art teachers met for four group discussion sessions termed 'critical friends groups. These were facilitated by the researcher who then visited schools to observe the teachers in practice. Informal, reflective discussions involving the participants followed. The teachers' conversations were transcribed and interpreted using a critical appreciative framework that used themes to highlight qualities of practice and beliefs. These were presented as a collaged narrative including the voices of the accomplished teachers and my reflections as critic. The analogy of quilting represented the piecing together of teachers' conversations to form blocks and the analysis of these blocks in larger patterns of analysis. This research was underpinned by the belief that teaching is an art, and that accomplished teachers are artists. Models of criticism were applied to emphasise appreciation of the art teachers and their teaching. Observations, interpretation and

presentation were viewed through the eyes of a critic who values the sensitivity and intuition of the creative mind.

The results of the study indicated the importance of visual experiences and art appreciation in the formation of accomplished art teachers. These teachers valued individuality, creativity and ownership in children's art and respected the children as artists and visual communicators.   They defined art as a process, grounded in the human need to communicate and contended that this process is teachable and that preservice art education needs to be enhanced to more adequately train future generalist art teachers.

The research raised challenges to shift the focus in preservice art teacher education from linear models of instruction to a conception characteristic of risk-taking and flexibility. A stronger emphasis needs to be given to the place of art appreciation and significant visual encounters within preservice art education. Similarly, resource and studio management require greater prominence. The accomplished art teachers stressed the need to improve the profile of art education; the need for networks to overcome the isolation characteristic of primary art teachers; and greater training for generalist teachers rather than the wider introduction of specialist art teachers in primary schools.

The art-based methodology of critical appreciation encouraged the development of an ethical and critical research community that enabled significant data to become apparent. The use of collaged narrative yielded a meaningful quilt that may be metaphorically moved and placed in a number of preservice art education contexts. The critical appreciative method revealed that research could be conducted within a strong aesthetic paradigm.

The research indicated that accomplished primary art teachers possess considerable knowledge, skills and expertise that can be incorporated into preservice art education.

1   I feel a sense of great disappointment in the standard of art teaching.

An encounter with a quilt is incomplete if it does not include some understanding of the people who made it.

1.1   Introduction

This chapter explores the background and thinking that led to this investigation. It also aims to elucidate the importance of the issues raised and the factors influencing my choice of research approach.

1.2   Background to the research.

I trained as a generalist primary school teacher. As a child, I loved art, so it seemed natural to focus on art, taking as many art electives as possible in my general primary teaching preservice course. When I graduated, I was appointed as a generalist primary classroom teacher. In a short time, I had gained the reputation in the school as the 'arty one'. I found the children loved learning if it was connected to art and soon I was teaching almost all the curriculum through art. My Principal recommended me to the District Office of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, as a suitable person to take on the role of art specialist teacher across three local primary schools, teaching a few days each week in each school, and teaching only art across all grade levels. I loved this job, teaching enthusiastic children the joys of art in cramped and damp storerooms and verandahs that were affectionately known as 'the art room'.   While I taught, I pursued my own art practice. Focusing on fabric and textile surface decoration, I would be painting with the first of my own four children strapped into the baby carrier close to my heart. Art provided me with immense pleasure and personal fulfilment, and so I returned to complete a degree in art education and a subsequent postgraduate degree in visual arts.

I became a university lecturer in art education within the Faculty of Education in a New South Wales University. Most of my lecturing responsibility was in the compulsory module of visual arts education that all preservice primary teachers completed. The majority of my students would come petrified to their first art lesson. They would be convinced that they were going to fail and bemoaned their lack of natural talent in art. My role was one of changing their attitudes to art, and providing both an exciting introduction to art and a bundle of successful lessons they could take into the classroom.

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On the surface, I appeared to be a very successful art lecturer. I received very positive feedback on the quality of the art program I designed and implemented from students, the university and the broader art education community. I was awarded a University medal for excellence in teaching, and was nominated for a national award. Yet, despite this, I continued to feel a sense of great disappointment in the standard of art teaching in primary schools. While accompanying the preservice teachers into schools for their school-based teaching experience, I witnessed children completing boring, unartistic and limiting art activities. Teachers, including many of my ex-students, expressed an unwillingness to teach art, claiming that they 'never have time', 'it makes too much mess' and 'it is too much trouble'. I would see my ex-students teaching "art" with 30 identical blackline masters and I realised that preservice art education was failing to produce quality art programs for primary school children. From this concern, I decided to research ways of improving preservice art education for generalist teachers in a way that more fully acknowledged the issues and constraints present in the primary school context. This research began by looking through numerous research articles in an attempt to discern what it meant to be a 'good' art teacher in the context of Australian primary schools. I considered that if I could isolate the qualities of good art teaching I would then focus my research on designing a model to address these qualities. These initial ideas were quickly upturned. Firstly, there was only limited discussion in the research of the qualities that constitute expertise in primary art teaching. Furthermore, any idea of developing a definitive model of preservice generalist art education was likely to meet with the same lack of success that I had previously witnessed as preservice students become enculturated into poor quality art practices once they were released into the schools.

Concurrently, within my university, funding constrained the amount of time available for my preservice art classes. The allocation was reduced from twenty weeks of classes for three hours each week, to ten weeks of classes for four hours a week. The reduced time allocation became an opportunity to reflect on the models of practice and examine new ways to integrate technology and reconceptualise ways of instructing. It was from these musings that I decided to focus this research on examining the beliefs and practices of accomplished primary art teachers in order to ascertain qualities that may be used to inform and improve preservice teacher education in primary art.

As a preface to the discussions that follow, the next section clarifies the way language and terms have been used to describe the research aims and process.

1.3   Forming a common language

The term 'art' is used to denote visual arts education. Richardson (1999: 25) defines art broadly and simply as being anything made by humans. Embedded within this definition are a number of assumptions. Richardson contends that art involves skill in creating something that is beautiful and/or moving in its form. He considers that art is constructed and sited within a cultural context. Richardson (1999) views aesthetics as a broader concept that encompasses art, design and craft. He (Richardson 1999: 26) defines craft as "the skill of the operator as evidenced in the work" and design as "the realm of functional things". By implication, this places art in the realm of non-functional things. Definitions of art continue to be the subject of entire theories, and it is not the intention of this research to add to that extensive body of work. For the purposes of this research, Richardson's (1999) broad definition is accepted, as traditional 'fine arts' definitions may disregard a range of works generally produced in primary schools under the auspices of art. Fine arts also tends to marginalise a range of general aesthetic, craft and design work that may be acting in a general sense to expand definitions of art. Therefore, an open and inclusive definition is adopted in this research.

The participants

'Accomplished', is defined as being of recognised high quality in terms of the skills and ability to teach art in the primary school effectively as determined both by a group of key informants and by consultation with teaching peers. According to Pearsall (1998) accomplishment implies something that has been achieved successfully. In the case of this research, accomplished teachers are skilled professionals with an ability to teach primary art successfully and included attributes beyond skills or efficiency, such as ideas of attainment, 'giftedness', fulfilment, performance and talent. Dewey (1934: 19) writes of accomplishment as being characterised by a "heightened vitality." He further comments that accomplishment signifies, "active and alert commerce with the world: at its height, it implies complete interpretation of self and the world of objects and events." Accomplishment is not a fixed disposition but rather as Kissick (1993: 27) notes, "quality is

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first and foremost an idea, its criteria are susceptible to influences from within a given society."

'Primary school', in the Australian context, is the place in which children between the age of four and twelve years old receive their education. There are parallel systems of education that are predominantly administered by the state. The New South Wales primary schools referred to in this study include: state government funded schools known as 'State Schools'; Catholic schools funded by both government and Diocesan bodies; and private schools known as 'Independent Schools' funded through substantial parental contributions and some government funding. The accomplished teachers in this study all teach in primary schools, though some may additionally teach in secondary school and middle school. The focus of this research is on teacher practice and beliefs in relation to art education in primary schools.

This research re-examines what is considered as knowledge in art education and what constitutes artistic learning. In this study, 'art education' is viewed broadly as being concerned with the theory and practice of teaching and learning in the visual arts (Stankiewicz 1997). Furthermore, art education is recognised as being what Wilson (1997: 2) terms as "socially constructed", reflecting "conflicting sets of values that abound in pluralistic societies, in the worlds of art, and the worlds of education".

In New South Wales, preservice teacher education courses specialise in either primary generalist education or secondary specialist teacher education. The focus of this research is on the preservice teacher education of generalist primary teachers in the discipline area of visual arts education. In my university, the teacher education program at the undergraduate level is four years of full-time study and is organised into professional studies (such as philosophy, sociology, cultural studies and education studies), curriculum studies (such as visual arts, music, mathematics, English, science) and practical teaching experience (a school based program of practice based study). The preservice generalist teachers receive a ten weeks module for art education, consisting of four hours a week of lectures, studio practice and art appreciation.

The following section explores the rationale for wanting to commence this study and how my concerns were mirrored in the concerns raised in the literature.

1.4   Rationale for the study

While I had hoped to find the qualities of accomplished art practice addressed in the literature, it became apparent that these were more likely to be revealed, at least in part, in the everyday classroom practice of accomplished art teachers in primary art education. I surmised that I may be able to ascertain the salient qualities that inform principles and practice in preservice primary art education by observing and recording what accomplished art teachers do and how they talk about their practice. I considered that the elusive qualities I were seeking may be embedded yet not explicitly demonstrated in teachers' practice. I had previously been able to watch good teachers in action and speak to them about their teaching. So I sensed that accomplished art teachers may provide a source of knowledge and enlightenment and may contribute to the research by shedding light on their beliefs, knowledge and practice relating to art education.

More broadly, primary art education is a relatively neglected area for scholarly investigation. As Zimmerman (1994: 60) notes, there has been considerable neglect of research and practices related to art teachers. This impacts on future directions in art education and the way art teachers feel empowered within the research culture and future trends related to the discipline. Additionally, Zimmerman (1994: 65) contends that teachers need to be encouraged to find a voice and to be empowered to seek their own meaning and understandings as they engage in the practice of art teaching. According to both Galbraith and Wilson (Galbraith 1997; Wilson 1997), the potential for research in art teacher education is enormous, with relatively little inquiry being conducted into art teachers and their teaching and even less focus on primary art education. This claim is supported by Speck (1999) who asserts the urgent need for research into how teachers best teach art and for researchers to revisit the primary school and look at the art curriculum in terms of depth of knowledge, skills conveyed and creative outcomes. She (Speck 1999: 83-87) notes several aspects of primary education that need sustained research, in particular, the need for improvement in teacher education for primary art teachers. She contends that art education practices are largely ineffectual, tending to inculcate currently accepted

assumptions and beliefs that are, "based merely on sentiment." Eisner (1993: 54) writes of the importance of including teachers as integral to the research agenda in art education:

> I can think of no more important research agenda for art education than the fine-grained study, description, and interpretation of what actually goes on in the classroom. Out of the study of such individual universes, we might be able to secure a keener understanding of what excellent teaching entails and the variety of forms it can take.

The study aimed to reveal salient qualities possessed by accomplished primary art teachers that may inform future preservice art education for generalist primary teachers. I was interested to give the accomplished teachers a voice. Although I considered it important to watch the teachers in action, I also felt that I wanted to gather them as a group, so that they would be given the opportunity to talk about their beliefs and practice and be able to speak reflectively about art education practices. As Eisner (1992: 613) describes:

> Classrooms, unlike the room in which ballerinas practice their craft, have no mirrors. The only mirrors available to teachers are those they find in their students' eyes, and these mirrors are too small.

The rationale behind the involvement of accomplished art teachers in the study is that they may be able to communicate aspects of their practice and beliefs that could provide inspiration for models of future teacher education. Schofields (1990) contends that through conversations, it is possible to differentiate the present from the future and to think how the present and the future are likely to differ. It is within a framework of future action and improvement that this research is conceived. Since earlier attempts to enhance the quality of long-term, classroom based outcomes of my preservice art education programs seem to have been ineffectual, I wanted to develop a research design that was based on the full involvement of teachers and attention to the educational ecology surrounding primary art practices. It was significant to investigate the ways teachers organise their workplace and the scope of the programs they provide. I also wanted to hear what accomplished teachers consider to be the qualities of effective art teaching and the means through which they appreciate and communicate what really matters to them as primary art teachers.

It was assumed that this information may inform more reasoned possibilities for future preservice art education for generalist teachers. It was anticipated that by grounding the research in the beliefs and practices of accomplished primary art teachers, who were working in the context of primary school classrooms, the research might help to bridge the

gap between theory and practice and between the design of preservice art education and the limitations of the primary art teaching environment. I hoped that this research would lead to catalytic improvement in the quality of programs for preservice art education within my university. Eisner (1998: 14-15) describes the notion of catalytic research underlying the rationale for this thesis:

> A willingness to imagine possibilities that are not now, but which might become…a desire to explore ambiguity, to be willing to forestall premature closure in pursuing resolution…. the ability to recognise and accept the multiple perspectives and resolution that works in the arts celebrate.

This description by Eisner also captures the distinct cultural, social and human organisational forms that exist within my university. As Lincoln (1992: 28) points out, "We will have to reconsider what we believe to be academic, or learning, or research, or knowledge production, communities." Boughton (1999: 66) argues that "It is time we examined afresh our fundamental assumptions about what we believe our current practices achieve relative to the structure and content of teacher education courses". It is within this climate of rapid change and a perceived lack of quality instruction that this research is conceived. This investigation is underpinned by the view that, "any hope for improvement in art teacher education would seem to lie fairly and squarely in the hands of one of those involved in educating the teachers" (Hiller 1999: 37). As a teacher educator in primary art education, I felt it was significant that I researched the principles and practices of my discipline area. I considered that this would be most effectively achieved through speaking with accomplished teachers, so together we could explore the ideas seminal to primary art education and increase my ability to make informed choices about the future direction of teacher education within my university.

I view building an effective art teacher education course as an aesthetic design task. There are a number of fixed and variable problems, including very limited and finite time, large class sizes, an increasing range of teaching and learning choices, larger questions of 'self' and 'community' that arise from increased globalisation, communication technologies and pressure to provide more 'cost effective' forms of teacher education. The rationale for further investigation into teacher education practices in the light of current likely future contexts is also proposed by Di Blasio (1983: 39) who warns:

> It does little to have marvellous technological assistance for art instruction if art remains unsure about how these facilitated portions of instruction are to be conceived and conceptually managed within the overall scheme of art instruction.

Inherent to this idea is my belief that education serves as an underlying instrument for change. I wanted my preservice art education courses to reflect Eisner's (1995) idea that university art education should initiate students into the leading ideas of art, provide cutting edge visions of educational possibilities, and helping students imagine what future art teaching might be like.

This research was predicated on my belief that the competence of the teacher was central to the art education that children receive. From watching many teachers in action, I also believe that quality teaching practices manifest themselves in a diversity of ways and that teacher education programs should cultivate idiosyncratic forms of excellence. As a result of my ideas, beliefs and my personal interest in quality art education practices, I formed a series of queries to address. These included:

- What qualities do accomplished primary art teachers possess?
- What themes of significance to preservice art teacher education emerge from conversations with accomplished art teachers?
- How can these themes be used to inform future practices in primary art teacher education?

These queries echoed the concerns raised by Boughton (1999: 59) who points to three significant questions confronting preservice art education programs in Australia:

- What does the prospective art teacher need to know and to be able to do, in order to effectively teach art?
- Is such skill and knowledge fostered in the prospective art teacher as a direct consequence of the art teacher education program?
- Are the findings of research reflected in the art teacher education program?

As the underlying intention of the research was to inform my thinking and to enable me to more effectively develop preservice art education for generalist teachers, I was interested to discover the motives of the accomplished art teachers and their knowledge and understanding of art. I also felt it would be useful to explore the background of the accomplished teachers, their philosophies of art and their conceptions of children's learning

in art. I wanted to do this through discussion with the accomplished teachers, but I also felt that it may be necessary to observe the teachers working in the context of their schools to ascertain their classroom behaviours, practices and enacted beliefs. Underlying this approach, was the need to organise the qualities of the accomplished teachers into a pattern that could be used to inform and underpin decisions in relation to preservice art education.

The major aim of this study was the manner in which the qualities of the accomplished teachers could be used to imagine possibilities for future undergraduate education for primary teachers of art. Eisner (1993: 10) indicates: "The major aim, we must not forget, has to do with…the improvement of educational practices so the lives of those who teach and learn are themselves enhanced." Furthermore, Zimmerman (1994) writes of the need for greater involvement of teachers in any plan to enhance preservice teacher education. She feels that there can only be improvement in preservice art education when consideration is given to:

- The building of stronger bridges between theory and practice;
- The enhancement of teaching strategies;
- The promotion of positive outcomes of art teaching;
- The choice of appropriate mentors for training teachers;
- The inclusion of the mentors' ideas in teacher education; and
- The encouragement of both positive and negative reflection in art education.

As I considered the role of teachers to be pivotal in bridging the theory and practice nexus and enabling more meaningful teacher education, I wanted the accomplished teachers to become active and valued contributors to the study. As a result of these ideas, I sought a methodology that would enable me to investigate the issues of concern, while allowing for maximum involvement of the accomplished teachers.

1.5   Choice of research approach

My earlier experiences as a primary art specialist and generalist teacher indicated that it is predominantly teachers who determine what is to be taught and what shall be learned in the area of primary art education. As Houser states (1991: 30), it is teachers who decide "to what extent and by what means knowledge will be acquired." The reality in schools as I experienced it was that policy was one thing, but the actual practice in art education was

another. As Grauer (1999: 20) notes, "the reality of schools is that the teacher has the sole responsibility for developing and implementing the art curriculum." I wanted the discussions and views of the accomplished art teachers to play a key role in this research investigation and build a narrative that effectively represented the nature and diversity of accomplished art teaching in New South Wales primary schools. By listening to the stories of teachers, I could, as Cydney (1995: 50) notes, "examine how, what and why we teach and acknowledged that we do not teach from an objective, neutral, value-free place."

I had made the decision to use the qualities of the accomplished art teachers to inform my imaginings for teacher education within my university and so wanted to explore what it is that accomplished teachers bring to their teaching practices. I believe that accomplished teachers make conscious content and methodological decisions based on what they think is valuable for the children they teach. The results of Anderson's (Anderson 1999: 9) extensive study of the stories of American teachers concludes that "through understanding the experiences of teachers and the meanings they attach to them (these experiences) we may gain some understanding of what it really means to teach art." The premise underlying this research was that teachers needed to be able to speak of significant issues within the framework of educational research. There was respect for the knowledge produced by teachers and it was considered that this knowledge can ultimately assist future teachers. This notion was based on the work of Lincoln (1995: 91) that establishes the importance of practitioners in the research process as a way to, "replay those voices for the social, cultural and organizational system in which they are embedded." By extensively consulting teachers' voices, this research recognised the complexities of classroom practices in relation to the multiplicity of positions that teachers hold (Nadesan and Elenes 1998: 258). This research acknowledged the strong connection between the way teachers purport to teach and students' learning (Lather 1987). Zimmerman (1994: 59) stresses the need to be aware that "teachers' practical theories about teaching and learning processes are valued and the way these may impact on teacher education practices in art education."

I was keen to encourage the teachers to critically evaluate their beliefs and reflect upon the grounds of their own and others' actions. Mouffe (Nadesan and Elenes 1998: 253) stresses the need for teachers to interrogate their views recognising both achievements and shortcomings:

> Individuals must learn to reflect on their identities and the core values that make up these identities…In the process of reflection, individuals learn to evaluate their selves and make choices about the kind of self they wish to be.

To allow the accomplished teachers to become an integral part of the research and to provide opportunities for reflective discussions, I formed a critical friends group comprised of accomplished primary art teachers. This approach allowed for group discussion amongst the accomplished art teachers and encouraged them to reflect on their conversations and the conversations of others. While prior to commencing the study I knew some primary art teachers who I thought were accomplished art teachers, I decided not to choose them, as they might merely reflect my view of accomplishment. Instead, for reasons of greater validity, I decided to seek the advice of five key informants, who provided suggestions of accomplished teachers to be included in the group. The informants I approached were people who had considerable experience in art related fields working with primary teachers and who also had high level exposure to primary art teachers in a range of contexts. I considered that these informants were in a position to know a number of primary art teachers and be aware of differing standards of expertise among primary art teachers. The informants included:

- A senior curriculum consultant in art education in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training;
- A regional art coordinator;
- The senior education officer at the Art Gallery of New South Wales;
- The art curriculum officer at the New South Wales Association of Independent schools; and
- The art syllabus coordinator and writer for the New South Wales Board of Studies.

Each informant was asked to send me the names of ten 'good' art teachers in the primary school. The term 'good' was used as it was deliberately vague and undefined, so the informants could select people according to their own preconceptions of accomplishment, rather than any given definition characteristic of good teaching. The informants were also told they could choose specialists or generalists or both. All five informants returned the list, but only one of the five had filled in all ten spaces. Two of the informants said they weren't able to think of more than six good primary art teachers.

From these lists, I chose teachers who had been nominated by more than one of the informants. This gave a list of twenty-two teachers. Of these teachers, six were teachers I had met previously; three more teachers were known to me as being good art teachers; and the rest were not known to me. I contacted each of the nominated teachers by telephone. This was a time consuming process, but I felt it was important to make personal contact with each of the teachers and clearly explain the purpose and scope of the research. This proved to be a successful strategy, as twenty-one out of the original twenty-two teachers agreed to participate. Subsequently, one of the accomplished teachers suggested another person he considered to be an outstanding primary art teacher, and this person was also approached to join the group, resulting in twenty-two accomplished art teachers.

I wanted these teachers to meet and discuss their ideas and beliefs about art education in a pleasant environment away from their school context. I was keen for this to occur in a relaxed way so that the teachers could feel comfortable sharing ideas. I decided that the meetings would be termed 'critical friends' sessions, with the accomplished teachers positioned as key participants whose views were informed and critical to preservice art education. Also the term 'critical friends' is commonly used in New South Wales to denote groups of people with expertise who act as advisers, particularly in relation to curriculum and art. Art galleries provided good venues for the meetings as these were positive, aesthetic places to meet and they were also relatively central geographically to all the teachers. Both the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) Art Gallery agreed to host the meetings. I organised four meetings, each one week apart and on different days and times and invited the accomplished teachers to attend two or more of these meetings at the time and gallery of their choice. All the accomplished teachers attended at least two meetings, with the majority coming to all four meeting sessions.

Each critical friends meeting lasted for between two and four hours. During this time, the accomplished teachers sat informally in a circle around coffee and cakes. While I provided some leadership with questions, the meetings tended to follow an informal pattern with the teachers raising issues of concern and points to discuss. After the first meeting it was apparent that a level of friendship had already begun to develop between the accomplished teachers and also between the group and myself. Each critical friends meeting was audio-

taped and transcribed. I also took field notes. Summaries of all notes and transcriptions were emailed or posted back to the teachers for discussion and reflection and were discussed in subsequent meetings.

Following the critical friends group, I felt that I wanted to see how the ideas and beliefs the accomplished teachers had shared were enacted in their classrooms. So I approached nine teachers from the critical friends group to visit in their schools. These nine teachers were chosen because they had raised issues or had beliefs that intrigued me and I wanted to pursue these further through classroom visits. The classroom visits occurred about six months after the critical friends meetings. During this gap of time I kept regular email, letter and phone contact with all the critical friends. During these informal contacts, I asked for their reflections on ideas raised and for clarification of issues. Sometimes, I instigated these contacts, and at other times, they were instigated by the teachers who wanted to send me some artwork samples, resources or other information, or were keen to hear more about my progress and offer additional thoughts or reflections. Details of these informal meetings were kept in a journal. The classroom visits were generally for one full day for each teacher, though for six of the teachers, I completed two or more visits, staying between two and four hours on each visit. The length and duration of these visits were largely governed by the wishes of the teachers and the time available within the school timetable. By this point of the research I had become my close friends with the accomplished teachers, especially those I had visited in their schools. While the visits signalled the formal end of the data collection, I continue to meet with these teachers and sometimes record ideas or comments they make. Several of the accomplished teachers continue to email me and we regularly meet for coffee.

In writing up the findings of this research, I have used the metaphor of quilting to describe the way the critical narrative has been pieced together from the comments of the accomplished teachers and with reflections from me as critic. The quilting metaphor proved to be an effective tool for organising the patterns that resulted from the piecing together of the teachers' conversations. It allowed dominant ideas to emerge, while permitting the ownership of each block to be clearly identified. The use of the quilting metaphor is discussed more fully later chapters and is reflected upon in the concluding chapters of the thesis. Furthermore, quilting quotes, obtained from old quilting manuals

have been used in conjunction with the chapter headings and particular section headings to signify my thoughts and musings on the purpose behind each chapter and pivotal section.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study has significance to primary art educators and generalist primary teachers. It also provides insight into the qualities of accomplished primary art teaching and the way these can be used to inform preservice art teacher education. In particular, the study used the qualities the accomplished teachers to establish priorities for content and method within primary preservice art education. This is a significant area as current concerns exist over the poor quality of primary art in schools and the role teacher education has to play in ensuring a higher standard of art teaching for younger children. This study also raises significant issues for teacher education in general, particularly in relation to the structure and organisation of teacher education. The significance of this research is described fully in chapters 16 and 17.

This study also adds the growing interest in art-based research methodologies. It explores the use of critical appreciation as a research method and contributes to developing artistic forms of inquiry. In particular, this study re-examines conceptions of value and worth in relation to art-based research methodologies.

1.7 Limitations and assumptions

There are a number of limitations and assumptions that have been made in undertaking this study. Firstly, it is acknowledged that the accomplished teachers used in this study were an atypical group of highly accomplished teachers. They were not considered representational of generalist primary teachers in New South Wales. Secondly, this research was framed around the assumption that the qualities of accomplished teachers could be used to enhance practices in preservice art education. This idea assumed that the characteristics of accomplished teachers could be applied to general primary preservice teachers who often are not accomplished at art and who may not have an interest in becoming effective primary art teachers. Thirdly, the research method adopted was within the qualitative paradigm and used an art-based approach based on critical appreciation. As such, it was reliant upon my skills as a sensitive observer and detailed descriptive and critical writer to present the accomplished teachers accurately and with clarity. There are a number of other

assumptions and limitations. These are discussed in relation to research methodology in chapter 4; as they existed as delimitations in the interpretation of the research in chapter 5; as they impacted on representation and narrative in chapter 6; and in reference to the specific data collection methods used in chapter 8. Limitations and assumptions are also referred to in the discussion of results in chapters 17 and 18.

1.8 Overview

This introductory chapter has provided insight into my thoughts and the issues that led me to want to investigate the qualities of accomplished teachers and the application of these to preservice art education. It proffered a rationale for the research and briefly summarised the approach used. Context issues are placed in the early chapters of this research because I feel it is important to understand these in order to fully grasp the selection of methodology and ultimately the comments made by the accomplished teachers and their usefulness in terms of preservice art education within my university. Chapter 2 presents the context in which the study was conducted. This context was approached from the position that there are a number of problems facing primary art teaching and learning and that these operate together with school and teaching contextual issues to detrimentally impact on primary art education. The issues pertaining to teachers were then discussed in the broader context of issues in preservice art education and more generally within teacher education. While chapter 2 focuses on issues in Australia, it places these issues within the context of international concerns related to primary art teaching and learning.

Chapter 3 continues the investigations of context, but interprets context as being the sets of beliefs about art education which teachers hold and the influence these have on their actions and curriculum decisions. In this chapter, issues shaping New South Wales education were explored. These included: the impact of ideas stemming from the child art movement; ideas of industrial art; expressive art; art as a form of cognition; art as aesthetic response; art as a from of communication; art as a cultural agent; and the influence of postmodernist ideas. This chapter provides a context by which later analysis of the accomplished teachers' ideas were formulated.

While this first chapter has briefly summarised the research methodology used, this is more fully explored in chapters 4 and 5, including a justification for the selection of critical

aesthetic appreciation as the preferred research methodology. Chapters 5 and 6 examine the manner in which the methodology was used to interpret the data in relation to the qualities of the accomplished teachers. These chapters argue the form of critical aesthetic research methodology and justify the use of narrative and quilting as a way to describe, interpret and present data.

Chapter 7 was a personal response to ethics. It expands on the ethical considerations typical of most qualitative inquiry by exploring issues of ethical investigation specific to art-based research. It also revealed the particular issues of research that have influenced me personally and expresses the desire to broaden ethical considerations to include the wider impact of research.

Chapter 8 describes in specific detail the research approaches used in this study to gather data. Together with chapter 9, the positioning of the critical friends and the accomplished teachers visited were described and notions of authorship, voice and the themes used to organise and present data were revealed and critiqued.

Chapters 10 to 15 present the findings of the research. These chapters have been organised to present a flowing narrative, beginning with the accomplished teachers' early experiences of art and significant visual encounter; through to descriptions of their physical classrooms; and onto the views they hold about the role of art in children's lives and the positions they adopt in relation to planning teaching and learning in art education in primary schools. The final section of the presentation of the data includes the teachers' meta-reflections on the research process and the way their ideas and positioning changed over the course of the study.

Chapter 16 presents a summary of the current situation in New south Wales primary schools as characterised by the accomplished teachers. This is followed by a description of the significant views about art education held by the accomplished teachers. Aligned with this section, is a description of the affective qualities of the teachers and the impact of passion, enthusiasm and risk-taking on the actions and beliefs of the accomplished teachers. Form these ideas, models of practice were developed. These models of practice led in chapter 17 to a series of recommendations in relation to enhancing the quality of preservice

art education programs for primary teachers. The final chapter of the study questions issues of accomplishment and presents the teachers as lifelong learners with a passion for growth and change in relation to both art and art education. This final chapter also critiques the methods used and positions the reader within the study. The last section documents the journey I have travelled through this study and elaborates on future direction as a result of the findings of this study.

2   Context as frame

The first essential of a quilter's equipment is a frame, for without one even small
objects such as tea cosies and cushions are likely to pull out of shape.
(Hake 1937: 12)

2.1   Introduction

This chapter identifies a variety of contextual factors that shape research in art education. The focus of this chapter is on the exploration of issues related to the pedagogy of primary school art teaching and the context specific to teacher education. Context is germane, given the adoption in this study of a critical aesthetic approach to investigation, modelled on the practices of art critics (as will be discussed more fully in chapter four). Art criticism is based on the notion that artworks are products of collective beliefs. As Emery (1999) contends, art exists as a construction of the collective beliefs of society and acknowledges that context and the principles upon which that context is formulated directly impact on the nature of art. Eisner (1998) argues that criticism depends upon an awareness of qualities within a work and the antecedent and contextual conditions to formulate meaning. The making of meaning requires knowledge of the context, and it is assumed that such contextual acuteness enhances the quality of aesthetic perception. This view is encapsulated in the writing of Eisner (1998: 185):

> The context as a whole is a primary source of information; actions within it
> constitute a subject that can reveal the meanings people share within that context. A
> quality observed or a datum secured becomes a meaningful source of information
> as it fits into or relates to a larger constellation of events or meanings.

This statement also stresses the interrelatedness of context. Context is not a single entity. As is the case of this investigation into accomplished primary art teachers and teacher education, the context is as Freedman and Hernandez (1998) describes as a complex social, political and economic milieu in which theory and practice are enacted. The context for this study is not a single, static quality that can be described with any sense of universality at the commencement of the study. Rather context closely resembles what Keifer-Boyd (1996: 37) describes as a tangled web of "shifting, contradictory realities (that) coexist, collide and interface".

Context can be read at several levels, with a macro context for art teaching and teacher education in general progressing to a micro context, involving the specific situations and conversations of the accomplished teachers in the study and my position as researcher. History is also an important aspect to understand when examining context. The intention of the history and summary of main influences in art education (as presented in the following chapter) is included as a way to locate the ideas that have impacted on contemporary practice and the qualities and conversations of the accomplished art teachers and ultimately models of preservice art education. Historical context is part of the way meanings are made using a critical appreciative approach and are relevant to consult within a framework that stresses the primacy of developing personal meanings. Historical and contemporary literature in the fields of critique, art education, teacher education and qualitative research provide sources for developing a context for the study. This study is located within the larger intellectual context of art-based inquiry and inclusive research. That positioning determines the themes, directions and contradictions that form the context for this study. Through a detailed literature immersion, I put meaning to my ideas and research questions and forge a specific identity for the study. The literature enables a contextual examination of the 'who, what, when, where, why and how' surrounding primary art education and associated teacher education practices and gives meaning to my experiences and those of the accomplished teachers both before, during and after the research process.

It should be emphasised that context is considered to be dynamic and so even as it is written about, it is inevitably evolving and metamorphosing, and with these changes, interpretation and meaning also change.

The following sections isolate contextual issues that have particular bearing on this research. They should be read as snippets of fabric that together with historical influences form the inspiration for the blocks and patterns of this thesis, influencing how the quilt is arranged, stitched and eventually backed.

2.2   Problems in primary art learning and teaching in the classroom.

Holt's study (1997: 94-95) in the United Kingdom found that primary art education falls below what can be considered 'satisfactory' performance in over one third of schools studied. This study concludes that there is considerable concern over the quality of primary art education learning within England, particularly in relation to the training of teachers and the types of activities being completed by children.. Similarly, Chia (1995: 6) describes Singaporean primary art teaching as being characterised by:

> Apathetic teachers… who rely on their old 'stand-by' favourites which have little educational purpose… there is a sense of aimlessness about art teaching in many primary schools… there is a need for proper training of teachers who will teach art.

Eisner (1997: 62) writes of the poor standard of art education in American elementary schools, summarised by the comment:

> I have emphasised some of the salient characteristics of the teaching of art at the elementary level because I believe that is where art programs are weakest and because that is where I believe they are particularly important in the child's educational development.

Australian studies on primary art education (Ashton 1999) present a similar picture to the international studies. Art is seen as having the potential for disruptive class behaviour, and hence many teachers seek activities that allow tight control of children's behaviour and use limited resources that are 'easy to clean-up'. As Ashton (1998: 8) notes, "I lament how in our primary schools, art often serves as a window dresser, is conspicuously spasmodic, and how its curriculum status is akin to a twilight zone with systematic documents few and far between." Primary school teachers tend to adopt a child-centred approach, opting for individual, open-ended tasks where the teacher embraces a positive and supportive role but provides almost no formalised instruction. Kalam (1954: 87) writes of the limitations of such an approach almost five decades ago. He predicts:

> Many elementary school teachers possess limited potentialities in art expression, but in the new orientation in visual arts education, more attention is devoted to the

> learner than either to the subject matter or to skill and perfection, since it is regarded as only for the talented few.

Wilson (1999: 6) identifies the major problems in primary art education as being:

a) The belief that art activities are developmental (for example, creative development and manipulative development) rather than for learning specific things about art.

b) The belief that child art is precious and that it can best unfold where adult influence is kept to a minimum.

c) The belief that young children's attitudes, beliefs, values and knowledge with regard to art can be changed in a relatively short period of time in the classroom, often taught by generalists who themselves have little knowledge of art.

This last point emphasises another problem identified by both Eisner (1997) in the United States context, and Hiller (1999) in the Australian context. Both these writers stress the conservative and traditional nature of teaching in art. As Hiller (1999: 36) states, "the practice of art education in our schools relies very much on the passing of tradition… many teach as they themselves were taught…this means that innovation takes a considerable time to come into effect." Similarly, Eisner (1997: 62) attributes the lack of progress and improvement in elementary art education to the, "virtual absence of time to teach and the lack of basic training among elementary teachers when art is taught." Freedman (1998: 7) also notes that curriculum tends to be highly conservative, aimed at documenting agreed knowledge within art education rather than seeking innovative and substantial changes to current practices.

My experience in undergraduate teacher education indicates that many general primary teachers, and preservice generalists, lack confidence and a personal conviction to teach art. This belief is reflected in the research of Ashton (1998: 1) who notes that teachers who themselves personally fear art and feel a lack of personal expertise in art tend to avoid art teaching with children. Holt (1997: 95) considers that the lack of skills and knowledge among primary teachers contributes significantly to the overall poor standard of art education in primary schools. He states that, "the approach of teachers themselves might be involved in the emergence of the difficulties that have been noted with regard to this area of the curriculum (primary art)". Eisner (1997: 61) links the poor quality of primary

art teachers and their lack of confidence to their experiences of art education schools. He writes:

> Elementary school teachers are not particularly well prepared to teach art. Their own experience when they were students in elementary and secondary schools has been limited, and for most part they tend not to feel comfortable in this area. Their experience and training in art education has been meagre. Many teacher education programs require no training in art education as an aspect of teacher preparation. When one realizes that many elementary teachers had their last exposure to a trained art teacher at junior high school level, that the majority of them studied no art at the secondary level that a substantial proportion have had no training in art education at the university level, and that supervision and consultation in art education at the school district level is being drastically curtailed, the magnitude of the problem begins to emerge.

Eisner's comments, while referring to the American system, may equally apply to the Australian context. Associated with the lack of knowledge and training apparent in primary art teachers, is a lack of self-esteem. Wright (1989: 6) notes that teachers of art in the primary school have a lower perceived status than teachers in secondary school. They are generally not involved actively in professional art associations, nor do they contribute to syllabus planning or research in the field. Wilson (1997) argues that what happens in the primary school in practice is closer to bicolage, more reflective of superficial busy work or classroom practices than what occurs in professional art practices. Holt (1997) noted a clear lack of purpose and direction in primary art. Parmenter (1995: 8) comments that generally primary art is viewed as a fun subject between the more rigorous, literacy disciplines. Primary art is characterised by a lack of coherent or sequential programs that tend to trivialise art learning. As Taylor (1986: 258) writes:

> Teachers provided materials, gave the class a title and left them to 'get on with it’ indicates the need for a concerted in-service programme but particularly points to the scale of the teacher-training problem.

Cunliffe (1990: 278) notes that teachers, “frequently repeat with their pupils many of the art activities they did themselves as students.” The result of lack of specific content and sequence in art education is at best a collection of activities with little coherent purpose, or at worst no art education provided to children at all. Hiller (1999: 37) summarises the shortcomings of Australian primary art education when he questions:

> How many school students study art without becoming more creative, without having their aesthetic vision enhanced, without having developed any specific abilities which might contribute to cultural harmony and without having developed any significant skills?

Linked to these perceived shortcomings is the view that primary art lacks focus. Numerous and at times conflicting aims are attributed to primary art education in Australia. To be able to understand art teaching practice, there is a need to ascertain the goals and intentions governing practices and how these form a context for this research investigation. Speck (1999: 72) summarises the aims of Australian art education as follows;

> In Australia there is a general set of beliefs upon which the art curriculum rests. The main beliefs are that the curriculum should assist the growth and development of children; that creativity, divergent thinking and problem solving should be promoted in art making; that children should be introduced to the full range of art experiences appropriate t their developmental level; that learning about art should be culturally enriching, and that children should learn how to talk about art.

To this list of intentions attributed to art education, art educators generally believe that art provides an expressive medium through which children can develop personally. This notion of art as a vehicle for expression is a feature of current and recent curriculum documents (Wales 1974; Education 1989; Smith 1995; Board of Studies 2000). Art educators further believe that through art, children can explore problem solving in a climate of developmentally grounded self-expression. Creativity and freedom is stressed over techniques, and teachers adopt a role of facilitator, providing positive and sympathetic praise, but little direct assistance.

In the last few years the influence of technology (Education 1989; Board of Studies 2000) also appears in the overall aims of art education. There is a tacit implication that art education should be centred on technology and be more functional, especially in the area of 'new literacies' such as visual literacy and interactive multimedia. This diversity of aims is seen by Speck (1999: 73) as being a hindrance to art education and a negative contextual influence. She writes, "This array of aims, laudable though they are, can result in the classroom teacher losing sight of the structure of the discipline of art, so a curriculum area already beset by the breadth myth, is further spread by the diversity of aims."

The introduction of this contextual chapter canvasses the broad contextual issues that impact on New South Wales art education and concomitally influence the content and form of this thesis. The next sections elaborate on those contextual aspects, which most directly impact on this study. The first (section 2.3) relates to the acceptability of non-teaching as a method of art instruction and the impact this continues to have on art education pedagogy

in primary schools. The following section (section 2.4) presents the physical teaching context of classrooms and that lack of confidence and experience of generalist primary art teachers. The final section (section 2.5) examines general issues in primary art teacher education and the differing views on the ways art education needs to operate within teacher education to address these issues.

2.3   Issues related to the school art learning context.

The child development approach to art education (Lowenfeld and Brittain 1964) favours a non-interventionist approach, whereby the teacher adopts the role of monitor of children's art development rather than active teaching of art. This view (Cizek 1921) allows the 'non-teaching' of art to be legitimised as a method of protecting the sacrosanct, naïve and expressive quality of children's artwork. Ashton (1998) contends that this view is still quite prominent in Australian schools and among teachers. Recent researchers criticises the child art view and presents a counter argument to the non-interventionist model (Taylor 1986; Speck 1999). Taylor (1986: 225) comments that, "a frequently held view that a child-centred education with respect for the stages of development, is at variance with the imposition of the external knowledge and influences which critical studies is assumed to entail." He feels that the child art view leads to inhibitions in primary art teachers about using critical dialogue with adult produced artworks as a way of enhancing children's art development. Taylor (1986) feels that high quality teachers greatly enhance children's art learning and that "the approaches of some skilful teachers demonstrate that there is an essential balance between the introduction of the visual arts to young pupils and the process of drawing out responses from them" (Taylor 1986: 255). Similarly, Speck (1999: 75) values the role of active teaching strategies in primary art education. She writes;

> The developmental evidence upon which primary school art curricula are designed
> is faulty. The developmental evidence is significantly maturational evidence,
> because art development is not being assisted by teaching. In turn, this means that
> the current developmentally based breadth art curriculum is marketing a low level
> of visual art devoid of the quality input teachers should be offering.

Speck (1999: 75) is critical of the lack of sequential and sustained teaching that occurs in primary art education. She contrasts that to the more systematic development of knowledge and skills characteristic of other discipline areas.

When children are taught literacy and numeracy teachers expect children to improve in these areas. One of the chief problems with the breadth art curriculum is that, unlike language arts and mathematics, teachers have not been 'teaching'.

Speck (1999) argues the importance of quality art teaching in primary schools and the need for systematic teaching, rather than merely assumed acquisition of art skills and knowledge by children. She contends that to "attribute the U-shaped curve to developmental factors…is akin to arguing that eight year olds children who are not taught reading will naturally decline in their reading ability" (Speck 1999: 75). Wright (1989: 7) also affirms the importance of teaching intervention in the art learning of primary school age children:

It is at the craftsperson stage (approximately 5-11 years of age) when the child is interested in mastering the arts, that teachers need to play a more active role in the educational process and artistic development of the child.

Allied to the argument of non-interventionist, developmental type art education for young children, is the emergence of a breadth curriculum (Speck 1999). Based on the notion that all that is required of a teacher is the provision to children of a range of materials and success-orientated end products, primary art curricula and teaching practices have aimed more at diversity and exposure rather than depth of understanding and sequential development.

In New South Wales, a centralised state government body produces mandatory curriculum for teachers to follow. Initially, this was done by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, but in recent years, the New South Wales Board of Studies, a government funded body of employed syllabus officers is responsible for the development and distribution of art syllabus and curriculum documents to primary school teachers. The 1989 Visual Arts K-6 syllabus (Education 1989: 19) refers to the need for the children to "experiment with a range of materials to explore the way they can be used to express ideas visually." Similarly, the current syllabus (Board of Studies 2000) stresses the need for children to engage in a range of forms including drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, ceramics, fibre, photography and digital forms. Speck (1999: 86) describes the primary art curriculum as "covering a lot of content areas but doing nothing in detail." Art continues to be characterised in many primary school classrooms as being a series of experiments with materials covering all art media areas. Speck (1999: 86) characterises

this sort of approach as the "cafeteria" approach to art whereby art curricula is based on exposure to a broad array of media areas. The children rarely have an opportunity to develop the art skills and understandings needed to work well in any one area of art. Such an approach reinforces in children the belief that they are not 'good at art' as they are constantly trying new things but never developing any sense of competency.

In contrast to this, Speck (1999: 78) argues that primary schools need, "structured, sequential, depth art curriculum that conveys significant art knowledge". Such a depth curriculum implies the skilled teaching of significant and identifiable areas within art education. Depth curricula are also characterised by a combination of both art making and art appreciation, and the balance between the physicality of the art making process and the conceptualisation inherent in understanding art. Wilson (1999) argues that a depth curriculum makes current art practices in primary schools more aligned to the type of practices characterised by the art world as a whole. There is a perception that there is little in common between current school art practices and the world of art. The term 'bricolage' is often used to characterise the type of art undertaken in schools. Bricolage is defined (Pearsall 1998: 225) as a construction or creation from a diverse range of things, and implies the creative reuse of junk or inexpensive materials, and could be an accurate description of what occurs in primary schools under many visual arts programs. Wilson (1999: 7) sees the need for an in-depth curriculum and closer link between school art and the aesthetic and artistic traditions of the discipline of art.

> The future success of art education is dependent upon our turning to the traditions of art and away from the traditions of art education for the content of art instruction. Every art lesson should be grounded in the problems artists set themselves. Every art lesson should deal with the ideas that artists have always dealt with. In short, relationships should be made continually between art classroom activities and the way in which art is experienced outside of schools.

2.4   Issues related to the teaching context

The majority of art teaching in primary schools is done by generalist teachers with limited art training and no confidence in their personal art making ability (and Ashton 1998). In commenting on the quality of primary art teachers in Australian schools, Duncum (1999: 15) makes this observation:

> Few generalist teachers know much about art, and consequently what many do is trivial. At Easter, for example, adult drawings of rabbits are commonly photocopies, children colour-in the photocopies and use cotton wool to make cute

fluffy tails. Many generalists feel that if they can't draw, they can't teach art. Feeling they cannot teach skills, what they do in art is to explore numerous materials, or one material in numerous ways.

This comment is echoed by Eisner (1999:17) who claims that, "we are expecting teachers to teach what they do not know and often do not love."

While the problems in primary art education go beyond physical constraints within the classroom, the physical environment in which teachers must administer their art education programs serves to further compound the difficulties faced in implementation of quality art programs. Teachers are faced with the dilemma of reconciling curriculum decision-making with the realities of contextual factors such as lack of time, space and resources. Art educators become realists within the framework of this act of reconciliation. As Ellis (1954: 88) notes, "Just as a sculptor works in the reality of limestone or walrus-ivory or teak, the art educator has his (sic) realities… these conditions, provoke, prevent, permit or invite him (sic) in his (sic) work." Despite increased communication technology and access to information, art teaching is largely constrained by the physicality of the classroom environment. Eisner (1997: 62), writes of American classrooms, but might equally be describing Australian primary classrooms I have worked in, when he notes:

> Many classrooms are without a source of water, few classrooms have adequate storage space, and the time required to set-up, teach and clean-up – given educational priorities- is too much for a teacher to be able to cope with. Thus, what is taught, "clean" projects are understandably attractive.

Chia (1995: 6) writes the following comment in relation to teaching conditions in Singapore, "The preparation of generalist art teachers for primary classes although reasonable, cannot ever be sufficient when these young teachers encounter a typical situation as the one described." The situation described is one of low educational priority for art; poor valuing of art by senior school personnel; a lack of teacher training in art; art viewed as a pastime rather than an academic endeavour; and inadequate teaching of art skills and art appreciation. While Chia is referring to the conditions in Singaporean schools, these comments mirror what appears to be the reality in most New South Wales primary schools. Eisner (1999: 18) makes this salutary comment in regard to the conditions existing in many primary schools:

> If those who teach the arts are doing about as well as can be expected in the situation in which they find themselves, and if the results of their work fall short of

our collective aspirations, how can we expect more without a substantial change in the resources provided to those who teach the arts?

2.5   The general teacher education context

In my university, preservice art education courses are being reduced in breadth, depth and duration. There is little time for students to reflect or engage in critical inquiry as they complete only the mandatory minimum of preservice art training. As Geahigan (1999: 14) notes, "Because of time constraints, not all concepts and skills can be taught to students. Educators need to identify those that will be of lasting value, enabling them to access the widest variety of art objects in the most meaningful ways."

Furthermore, much of teacher education is seen by students to be of little relevance, being overly abstract and theoretical (Brady, Segal et al. 1998). Learning is decontextualised and characterised by individual competition for the best grades rather than collaborative learning strategies (Brady, Segal et al. 1998). Boughton (1999: 59) comments that many "models of teacher education are frequently inappropriate to contemporary Australian schools." Wright (1989: 8) summarises the problems inherent in teacher education into three main issues:

> Three issues seem to have a direct impact on training: The low status accrued to the profession of early childhood and primary teaching: in sufficient emphasis and time given to arts subjects within teacher training institutions: and the relatively low level of artistic experience and ability of teacher trainees.

Wright (1989) identifies preservice art training as a crucial factor in enhancing the quality of art education programs in primary schools. Condous (1999) writes of the need for teachers to be trained well if arts are to be taught well. Yet there are a number of limiting factors impacting upon the quality of art teacher education. Kalam (Kalam 1954) notes that the training of the general classroom teacher in the visual arts raises many problems. Limited time is devoted to preservice art education. Condous (1999: 20) laments that:

> The length of some courses offered are far too short to bring any significant change to the education programs in the teaching of art. At the same time, the breadth and depth of art has expanded, with the introduction of computer technology and conceptual and performance art."

Duncum (1999: 15) comments that the preservice teaching of primary generalists is considered the "black hole" of art education. It is felt that literacy and numeracy training is

given a far higher priority in teacher education than the arts. This view is summarised by Taylor (1986: 256) who writes:

> Because society sees and values the importance of numeracy and literacy skills, it expects its intending primary teachers to have obtained minimum qualification in these areas and they form an essential part of course content. Unfortunately, little consideration is given to the important part in our lives which is played by what might be termed visual literacy.

This problem of the lack of time dedicated to art education in generalist teacher training is further compounded by the lack of entering ability possessed by students. Wright (1989: 9) notes, "students are expected to achieve literacy and numeracy before entering a tertiary institution, yet it is quite acceptable within our society to be visually and musically illiterate." Holt (1997: 95) notes that students entering generalist primary teaching courses have little experience of art, although they are surrounded by examples of applied art in their everyday lives. Holt's (1997) survey of students entering primary teacher education reveals that the majority of students perceive art as having little value to the real world and as being unregarded and a pointless activity. Geahigan (1999) also comments that most of the students he encounters in art classes in primary teacher education lack any entry points that would enable them to engage actively with artworks and offer sustained reflection about works of art.

Ashton's (1999) study of generalist primary art students in Australia found that they are critical of their own ability in art making. These students equate ability to draw as being the same as understanding art and feel there is some sort of biological determinism that makes them "hopeless" at art. Comments like, 'I have never been good at art. You're either born artistic or you're not' indicate an entering attitude that is already highly negative and failure orientated. Ashton's (1998: 5) research indicates that "within each intake of the undergraduate education program, seventy to eighty percent of students identify themselves as belonging in the atrophied drawing category." Ashton concludes that there is a serious need to challenge primary teachers' own sense of art.

Similar findings are noted in Nakamura's (1999: 10) study of sixty-four preservice Japanese generalist teachers. He found that primary teachers generally had:

a) A difficulty explaining verbally what they thought and felt about art with shallow conversations that lack depth;

b) A lack of confidence in their own ideas in relation to art;

c) A tendency to remain with primary impressions of art, often feeling uncomfortable looking at art works analytically and understanding them rationally;

d) A feeling that art should be enjoyed more with emotion rather than with inquiry;

e) A difficulty having dialogues about art with other students; and

f) A lack of confidence in their own abilities.

Regardless of all these problems expressed, Nakamura (1999) found that the students enjoy art classes and find meaning through a process of active participation and interpretation, rather than by being given information. The students need to feel a sense of security and enjoyment in their learning if they are to succeed.

Preservice primary teachers are required to gain competence across all discipline and curriculum areas and to have training in a number of non-curriculum specific fields, such as Aboriginal studies, special education and child protection. As Wright (1989: 9) notes, teacher education has become, "a difficult if not impossible task to expect early primary teachers to gain competence in all curriculum areas." A fundamental dilemma for teacher educators is the question of what to include and what to omit given the time constraints that exist (Boughton 1999). Determining what knowledge is most important, the ways that knowledge should be presented to students and what is to be gained by students as a result of the educational experience are key questions in art education. Bresler (1995: 18) writes of this same dilemma in the American context, reflecting on, "a proliferation of values, differing with their view of what is worthwhile art knowledge, the organisation of learning opportunities, and suitable pedagogues for these learning opportunities."

Current art education in the Australian context tends to favour an educationalist rather than art-based curriculum for art training. Holt (1997) believes that a considerable volume of any art education course consists of psychological material referring to child art. Time is spent on art education theorists and the curriculum implications of this knowledge. Hiller (1999: 37) writes that:

> Many of the methods were at best indoctrinatory, based on summaries of work by
> such authorities as Lowenfeld (1947) and Read (1956). Many of the practices
> developed were and in some cases still are, questionable.

The general education underpinnings of art education courses are combined with a practical skills and methods program that emphasise creative skills across a range of media areas. The rationale behind this approach is that future teachers need to become personally competent in a range of materials. This view of art education is summarised by Boughton (1999: 60):

> For teacher education in Australia, at least until the sixties, the creative doctrine provided simple guidelines for college programs. Prospective teachers needed to learn to become artists. It was necessary to engage in art making, usually through painting, printmaking, drawing, sculpture, and ceramics. Since the maker must engage in a creative art in order for art to be made, art making and creative thinking were considered as synonymous.

Art educators continue to grapple with the multitude of seemingly conflicting demands placed upon teacher training. Eisner (1999: 17) writes of the need for greater sophistication in the way tertiary art education is conducted, claiming that "the arts require in those who would teach them the ability to see what is subtle yet significant. It requires far more sophistication to teach the arts than to teach those subjects that are highly rule bound." There is a need to educate, rather than simply train art teachers. Keifer-Boyd (1997) recommends a move away from the 'banking' concept of teacher education, whereby knowledge is seemingly 'deposited' into students. Instead, she suggests the metaphor of the 'midwife' where teachers gently facilitate the process of nurturing skills through encouraging students to bring forth knowledge and skills through research and critical inquiry. Hiller (1999) also writes of the need to depart from indoctrinatory techniques to approaches more aligned with the development of knowledge through rational discourse. Teacher education in art is dominated by the expressive art ethos that stresses making above critique. Kalam (Kalam 1954: 87) writes of the need for teachers to be "allowed to experiment and discover for themselves how experiences in visual arts are capable of satisfying the needs and purposes of the individual as well as of society." Galbraith (1997: 14) concludes as a result of research with generalist teacher education students that "we have a responsibility to provide ...preservice teachers with a research base underpinning their careers, or to otherwise provide leadership roles in the preparation of teachers for the 21st century." Her research indicates the necessity to go beyond a general education framework, stressing child development and psychology, to the underlying values and principles derived from the history and socio-cultural framework of the art world. She also

attests to the importance of critical and ethical underpinnings in the training of effective art teachers. Galbraith (1997: 19) stresses the imperative to prepare teachers who:

> Display established pedagogical values – people who are not only ethical, caring, passionate about teaching and versed in the discipline of art, but also innovative, and receptive to the ways in which new technologies might enhance their professional lives as well as the lives of their students.

While Galbraith offers a view of art education that is expansionist and inclusive, Duncum (1999) argues that in the Australian art education context, teacher training has become too encompassing. His contention is that the enlarging of the agenda for art teacher education leads to a situation where the task becomes too immense. Teachers receive a scattered training program that lacks relevance to their real needs in the primary classroom. Duncum (1999: 15) contends that there is little point in expecting generalist teachers to learn anything but the most basic content in art, and moreover that there is limited need for them to do so. He suggests that to teach art well, all generalist teachers need, is a number of "teaching – cum- learning strategies" for both making and appreciating art. He argues that what teachers most need is only the adaptation of sound generic teaching abilities and sensitivity to children's interests. In contrast to the type of art education envisaged by Eisner, Ashton and Galbraith (Galbraith 1988; Galbraith 1993; Eisner 1995; Galbraith 1996; Eisner 1997; Eisner 1997; Galbraith 1997; and Ashton 1998), Duncum (1999: 15) contends that, "primary generalists do not need to draw well, be conversant with schools of art criticism, or know about historical stylistic sequences." He presents a reductionist view for teacher education as follows:

> If art as a school subject is considered to be essentially about making meaning, primary generalist teachers need only a very limited amount of specialist knowledge to teach art well. What they need most are teaching strategies, both in making images and in appraising images. They also need to grasp how to integrate art appropriately with their subjects.

It is within this context of the range of socio-political conditions, economic restraints and conflicting values that this study is conceived. This chapter has summarised the main contextual issues impacting on primary art education both within the classroom and indirectly through teacher education. The following chapter serves to summarise the major historical influences related to Australian art education and underpins the context of this study by providing a background to explain some of the enacted theories and ideas that the accomplished teachers represent through their conversations and actions.

3   Historical contexts for art education

Wherever possible those wishing to learn quilting today would do well to have a few lessons from an experienced quilter rather than to rely entirely on written directions.
(Hake 1937: 17)

3.1   Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present an historical overview of contexts for art education that impact on practices in New South Wales' schools. It is not the intention to produce a definitive and complete history of art education, but rather highlight general trends that contribute to the nature of art education in primary schools. The historical context is presented as a point of reflection that enables the ideas and practices of the accomplished teachers to be located in terms of their antecedent influences, and to determine the extent to which these historical contexts are reflected in the conversations and practices of the accomplished teachers.

3.2   Influences on New South Wales art education

A study of the history of art and art education shows that practices in these fields are heavily influenced by the leading ideas, and social and cultural issues of the time. The history of art education appears to mirror economic and social forces operating within local and global communities. Australian art education replays many of the trends occurring in European art and more recently, from the United States of America. New South Wales

systems of education are based strongly on a British colonial view and until recently, schooling in New South Wales was not greatly influenced by other factors. Australia is a multicultural country comprised of a diversity of ethnic groups, and in recent times, Aboriginal and Asian culture is more apparent in curriculum design and implementation. Aboriginal people traditionally do not have a single word for "art". They perceive art to be so intimately linked to spirituality and culture that it is embedded within these concepts. Within both traditional and contemporary culture, art and imaginings play a vital part in all aspects of life. Aboriginal Dreamings are conveyed through art and the keepers of imagery and cultural visual icons hold primacy of position in a social hierarchy.

Since European invasion and settlement began about two hundred years ago, Australia has been a land of migrants bringing from all parts of the world their skills, knowledge and beliefs. In recent years increased globalisation and communication has removed the barrier of distance from Australia and the emphasis in education is on the global rather than the local. Global interconnection is increasing in complexity and theory and practice are tending to be "appropriated internationally" (Freedman and Hernandez 1998: 183). Freedman and Hernandez (1998: 187) contend that:

> "National" curriculum guidelines for art education look remarkably similar across countries, international programs (such as the International Baccalaureate) provide leadership in curriculum development and student assessment, and computer networks enable students to easily access people and art from around the world.

The result of this internationalisation is that there appear to be relatively fixed common goals that are generally accepted internationally and impact directly upon local practice. Errazuriz (1998) argues that it is not always advisable or possible to justify local art instruction in terms of these internationally communicated, foreign aims. Errazuriz (1998: 177) bemoans that:

> Too often educational systems are mere copies of those devised in other countries and it is an essential task of educators to redefine and remodel their own educational programs in the light of their countries' aims and their actual social, economic and cultural conditions.

Freedman (1998) argues that there are a number of more localised influences that impact on art education practices including state regulation, cultural ideals and teacher professionalism.

3.3 The factors shaping art education

There are many historical and cultural factors which shape the formation of art education practices in Australia and the way general theories of art education are transferred and implemented within the context of New South Wales' schools. History helps to understand the present conditions and may serve to inform possible futures. Efland (1990) contends that the way art is taught today is largely conditioned by the beliefs and values regarding art held by those who advanced its teaching in the past.

Art education histories can be examined from a number of different viewpoints. Hernandez (1998) suggests at least six possible frames that can be used as a focus for historical contextualisation including: content, values, socio-economic relations, debates, influences and names and books. Freedman and Hernandez (1998: 58) also suggest broadening any reflective historical study to include "social, political, artistic and educational events that create bodies of knowledge and a structural network which provides a level of understanding of influences beyond the content of the field." Similarly, past and present histories combine and overlap forming both macro and micro histories that impact on the actions of an individual art teacher. A postmodern analysis of history is not about presenting accurate records of the past, but rather tracing the meaning of the histories apparent in terms of observed practices and the conversations held in relation to those practices. Freedman (1998: 6) argues that a postmodern analysis of history is inherently critical in that it "addresses underlying assumptions, interests and effects, as well as surface behaviours." In aesthetic critique, histories assist in positioning the art teachers and interpreting their conversations, motives and actions. Histories also serve in aesthetic critical writing to underpin imaginings of possible futures in art teacher education. Foucault (1998) argues that individuals exist within a system of conventions, rules, norms and discourses which in effect 'speak' that person, making them converse and think in certain ways. Assuming Foucault's view, histories are about tracing the ideas and how these are evident in curriculum processes. While individual accomplished art teachers may be relatively unaware of the historical art education discourses that shape their pedagogical preferences, there is a need to acknowledge the political affiliations and historical agendas that continue to shape art education practices in New South Wales' schools. Freedman (1998: 5) believes that the shifting meaning of discourses that are used to justify

educational practice require further study. Carroll (1997: 190) stresses the importance of
histories in the study of art eduction when she cautions:

> If the art education community is ambivalent towards its history and the beliefs and
> values and practices embedded in it , then the field is destined to repeat mistakes,
> weaken its successes by instructional stagnation, and expend its energies and
> resources on irrelevant curricular questions and instructional efforts. Of all this
> study suggests, it is that a community pays a clear price for "blind" practices.

Several major trends in art education impact on art education practices in Australian
primary schools and the following section headings serve to provide a simplified way to
organise the diversity of influences that exist presenting these in the approximate, though
overlapping, order in which they emerged within New South Wales art education.

- **Industrial art** presents the view that art is comprised of a series of skills that serve the
  needs of industry and a desire for a capable skilled workforce.
- **Child art**, views art as a natural development phenomenon of children, governed by the
  child's physical and psychological growth and the need to freely communicate their
  needs and emotions.
- **Art as expression** occurs through free engagement in art experiences that stress
  creativity, imagination and authenticity of outcomes, implying a level of therapeutic
  benefit to the individual.
- **Art as cognition** focuses on art as a form of intellectual inquiry capable of being
  studied from a critical framework and that art embodies unique forms of thinking in the
  process of creating artworks.
- **Art as visual, aesthetic response** explores sensory and perceptual definitions of art
  through disciplined inquiry into the principles underpinning the aesthetic.
- **Art as symbolic communication** treats art as a language form whereby people
  communicate through reading and writing visual symbols.
- **Art as a cultural agent** accentuates the role of art in social action, social reconstruction
  and the role of culture in society.
- **Postmodernism** challenges traditional definitions of art and questions the physicality
  of art and the definability of a concept called art.

3.4   Industrial art

The 19th century English view of art education considered that drawing, particularly technical drawing could serve industry. The technocratic paradigm for art education emerged in the late 1800s and subsequently gained popularity through the South Kensington approach to industrial drawing and design education. Chalmers (1998) contends that this view valued manual dexterity and hand eye coordination, taught through disciplined, reproductive drawing and art existed as a very practical subject providing skills and educating the tastes of artisans and consumers alike in the interests of advances in British industry and trade. Art was equivalent to drawing, and copying and skills in perspective drawing were valued. Students were deterred from being innovative and expressive and the main aim in schools is the training of "the eye, the hand and the mind" (Freedman 1987: 66). During this time, art became identified with the productive domain and skills were paramount to knowledge or conceptual development.

In Australia the influence of the industrial art movement included the introduction of craft and 'handiwork' into the schools. The approach was largely skills based and the concepts were primarily the elements and principles of design (Boughton 1998). Art was appreciated for its functional purpose such as architecture, photography and the design of furniture. Until 1972, New South Wales had a separate craft syllabus that encouraged skills such as bookbinding and basketry (Education 1972). The emphasis was on industrial design and learning a trade. Craft and folk art gained popularity, especially in the primary school, as a way to train hand eye coordination. There was a clear distinction made between craft and fine arts. Craft classes were divided into woodwork for the boys and sewing for the girls. Fine arts studied the history of the Egyptian and Roman worlds and the architectural wonders of the world. The Art Reader (Quinn 1905) has chapter headings such as "Some monuments of Egypt", "The Acropolis" and "A group of great churches." Historical and European masters defined notions of aesthetics and beauty. Conformity was valued more than individuality and teachers followed sequenced and prescriptive curricula. The intention was to teach the children as many conventions of the artistic or technical use of adult visual language as possible. Copying was an efficient way to achieve these aims, and art became largely composed of copying and basic design exercises. Chalmers (1998: 58) notes, quoting the work of Charles H Scott (1922) "drawing can be taught because drawing is a science. Art cannot be taught because it is an expression of the spirit or soul."

Aspects of the industrial rationale for art appear in syllabus documents from The Art Reader (Quinn 1905) through to the 1974 Visual Arts Curriculum for Primary Schools (Wales 1974). From my memory of primary school art in the 1960's, the class would be divided in half with the boys going off to woodwork with a male industrial arts teacher, while the girls were sent to sewing to create embroidery samples and handsewn aprons. The only art I recall in primary school was copying pictures of famous people or the pyramids from the "Effective Social Studies". In high school in the 70's the art lessons were structured around the elements and principles of design with one term on colour, another on line, another on texture and so on. During my initial teacher education we would be tested on remembering the elements and principles of design and being able to classifying plates according to these formal qualities.

3.5   Child art

According to Boughton (1998) by the late 1930's the word 'art' had been used to replace drawing in primary school art in Australia. The UNESCO seminar on The Role of the Visual Arts in Education was held in Victoria in 1954 (Boughton 1998: 58) where artists, teachers and inspectors met and formulated policy committed to the development of creativity. The doctrine of creative self-expression was clearly apparent in the stated aims of "Curriculum for Primary Schools" (Wales 1952: 357) where the first "Underlying aim of art in the primary school" was encouraging children to "express freely his experiences, his imaginative and creative impulses in his own way, care being taken that the creative forces within the child grow as freely as possible at each stage of development." This document bears a footnote reference to the work of Lowenfeld and Marion Richardson (Richardson 1948; Lowenfeld and Brittain 1964) exemplifying the influence of these theorists over early Australian art education. The twentieth century exists as the age of the child (Karpati and Gaul 1998) when the focus of society was on the child as individual. The child art movement promoted individuality and the child's art reflected inner feelings.

The 'child art' movement resulted from the merging of child development theorists and the psychological study of children's art. It considered that children's art could be used to develop the child's intelligence and democratic personality. Children's drawings were seen as images of the mind, mirroring the soul and allowing scientific investigation of the child's

thoughts, feelings and development. Franz Cizek (1921) argued that art was a natural aspect of human development, the absence of which impaired mental growth and social fitness. He felt that art education developed children's capacities to give expression to their feelings and ideas. Franz Cizek (1921) was fascinated by the visual creativity of children. Cizek believed that every child had a natural tendency towards creative and artistic expression. He argued that this natural tendency needed to be fostered through creative and imaginative activities. He favoured giving children unbridled freedom to express their ideas. Teachers adopted roles as facilitators, providing a stimulating environment, adequate and varied art materials, praise for the children's efforts but did not direct or influence children's creative processes. Marion Richardson (1948) continued the work of Cizek, recommending an approach to art education based on stimulating the children's imagination with "unconventional teaching", "evoking mental images" through questioning and conversation, and the "cultivation of pictorial memory" (Thistlewood 1998: 140). Cizek and Richardson's work was fuelled by child psychologists and child development theorists such as Viktor Lowenfeld (1964), John Dewey (1934) and Jean Piaget (1954) who theorised that primary aged children progressed through delineated and naturally occurring stages. While given various names by each theorist, these stages generally included a pre-symbolic stage, and symbolic stage, a realistic stage, and ultimately an appreciative, critical stage. Art education became centred on ensuring the children achieved certain developmental stages and focussed on different levels of growth of the child. Lovgren and Karlsson (1998: 96) argue that the role of the teacher in this approach became supervisory so as not to interfere with the creative process described as the "organic growth of the child".

The work of Viktor Lowenfeld (1964) was widely adopted by Australian primary and preschool teachers and his developmental model of children's art was evident for many years. He was directly referenced in the 1952 curriculum (Wales 1952) and referred to indirectly through both images and commentary in the 1989 syllabus (Education 1989). In my teacher education at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels the focus continued to be on the analysis of child art according to scientific parameters and developmental frameworks. Viktor Lowenfeld felt that children possess psychological conditions and personality traits that can be released through art. He believed that children's participation in art allows their natural democratic personality to develop. Freedman (1998: 90)

suggests that this philosophy was a way to "prepare children for social life and at the same time, protect them from it". Curriculum development was based on interpretation of development stages that emerged from the psychological and psychiatric study of children. Freedman (1987: 76) explains, the drawings of children existing in a manner that was "decontextualised to be interpreted as illustrating stages of growth not related to sociohistorical location."

Because child art was viewed as a natural and creative state, adults tried to eliminate academic processes from their art aiming to capture child like qualities. Children's art was seen as manifestations of higher forms of consciousness and intellectual development. The art world showed a renewed interest in primitivism and naïve representations. Teachers adopted an approach that Holt (1997) describes as 'operational passivity' in which adult intervention was harmful to the innate artisticness of young children. School art became completely child-centred and largely devoid of active pedagogical input. Holt (1997: 97) summarises this approach;

> There developed a widespread belief among teachers where the art education of children was concerned - no pedagogical intervention was required beyond the provisions of time, materials and the most generalised type of encouragement.

The teacher's role was to provide ample studio production through the provision of sensory stimulating activities and abundant materials. The activities would largely be unstructured creative tasks. Freedom was given to children and art was seen as a panacea to the systemic restrictions in education and children's lives. The main purpose of art was to develop the creative capacity of the child, and the child art movement supported initiative, inventiveness and spontaneity. The children engaged in natural explorations of materials in an environment of play, freedom and non-intervention. It was believed that such activities allowed the child's natural sense of beauty to be expressed through art. Concrete activities based on the productive domain were seen as being essential to prevent atrophy of children's creative urges.

Syllabus documentation (Wales 1952) was developed in consultation with child development stages and focused on the way lessons could be constructed to foster development. Drawing drills and imitation of masters was ruled out. The teacher was supposed to learn from the child, as the child was a source of inspiration and creative

energy. This approach empowered the learner, and child art became the exemplar, possessing innate sensitivity and beauty. There was a tension between what the role of the teacher should be and to what extent child art shares commonalities with its adult counterpart. Clahassey (1986: 46) describes art education and art teaching according to a child art paradigm:

> Motivated by a spirit of innovation, interest in the latest technology, and a desire to encourage creativity, art teachers searched for new and unusual media and art projects. Children were urged to express themselves in ever new and exotic techniques from blowing paint through a drinking straw to create "abstract expressionist" pieces, to the use of tongue depressors, toothpicks and fruity smelling markers.

The teachers became less clear about their role in art education and syllabus documentation loosely referred to concepts such as creativity, feeling and expression without clarifying their scope and applicability within the context of New South Wales' primary art education. This confusion is evidenced by the comment Holt (1997: 96) makes and although this relates to the position of art education in England, it applies equally within New South Wales' primary schools:

> Children are still often seen to be undertaking artwork in considerable, and sometimes complete, isolation from their teachers, and the work is likely to be largely self-generated, detached from any significant pedagogical input, and heavily dependent upon children's imaginative responses. Additionally, the products of such activity are frequently received by teachers in a supportive but wholly uncritical manner, an approach which prevents both assessment of present learning and the structure of future experience.

3.6 Art as expression

Allied to the child art movement was the art as expression movement. While sharing many aspects of the child art movement in relation to freedom and the importance of the art making process, the art as expression rationale was based strongly on the belief that art was vital to the emotional wellbeing of the child. This view stressed that children's enjoyment was paramount. Art was seen as being a place of freedom and recreation that ensured a balanced curriculum, catering for both the intellectual and emotional needs of the child. It was regarded as a leisure activity that was good for the soul and counteracted the regimental nature of more academic pursuits. Hernandez (1998: 68) argues art education was considered as an "educational rather than instructional subject."

Art was seen as furthering the cause of democracy through freedom of expression and spontaneity. In primary schools it was largely about making art. Analytic talk was de-emphasised and aims were described in vague terms (Boughton 1999). Teachers saw their role as providing a positive and creative atmosphere that encouraged free expression and the children's relaxation and enjoyment. Holt (1997: 98) describes primary teachers as likely to see their tasks in this area of the curriculum in terms of "attending to, supporting, providing the right environmental conditions, unfolding latent potential and releasing innate abilities." In an expressive art curriculum, the teachers adopt a passive role of non-intervention in regard to the teaching of art.

Art as expression tends to have three main manifestations in the primary school. That is, art as expression of the individual through the release of the subconscious; art as the romantic notation of free art that gains ascendancy over culture; and expressive art as a therapeutic device to enable children to cope with increasingly complex social order. While each of these manifestations is connected to the belief that art is the expression of the inner soul, the purpose behind the release of expression through art was different.

3.6.1 Individualism

The logic of individualism played a significant role in the rise of expressionist art in school. Based on the psychotherapy research, there was the view that the promotion of individual expression was vital to the development of a national culture based on democratic principles (Freedman and Hernandez 1998). The language of self-expression was fuelled by a belief in what Freedman (1998: 89) describes as "existential self-realisation and the production process." Artists such as Klein, Miro and Kandinsky were exploring the way art could reveal the subconscious mind. Read (1943) believes that expression of the individual through art could help to adjust that person to the pressures of a society. He contends (Read 1943: 164) that:

> The general purpose of education is to foster the growth of what is individual in each human being, at the same time humanizing the individuality thus educed with the organic unity of confirming their own individual subconscious experience.

Individualism as a goal appears in New South Wales art curriculum in 1974 (Wales 1974: 8) through the statement, "By self-expression and communication the child seeks to establish his own identity and become an accepted member of various social groups."

Individuality was largely a western movement. Asian and Islamic culture does not promote individualism through art. Pinto and El Bekay (1998: 128) describe Morrocan art education where, "individualism does not exist among children (and) Islam teaches them that collectivism must be an essential value in their lives. Islam is against individualism."

3.6.2 Romantic expressionism

Art education in New South Wales adopted aspects of romantic theories of creativity and self-expression. Art was seen as a means of communication capable of regenerating a new human. It was felt that art should aim at personality development and the reconstruction of democratic ideal through freedom of expression. Influenced by artists trying to discover authentic self-expression, free expression in art was seen as being vital to child development and a child's creative powers of communication. In keeping with the abstract expressionist ideal, curricula stressed that art could emerge completely from within the artist. The 1974 (Wales 1974: 8) syllabus argues, "creative expression, in all its forms provides absorbing fulfilment for it is the projection of his (the child's) own personal desires, images, thoughts and feelings." Affected by the theories of art and creativity found in late modernism and ultimately derived from romanticism (Cunliffe 1990), art curriculum adopted the expressionism philosophy stressing free teaching and inspiration. The work of art was viewed as a symbol of the child's feeling. Teaching practices stressed giving children total freedom to do as they pleased with abundant resources. Such practices were often vaguely sourced to the artmaking experiences of avant-garde artists of the time, such as Jackson Pollock.

3.6.3 Art as therapy

Allied to self-expression emerging from romantic and abstract expressionist art, was the view that art could be used to heal the individual soul and nurture the child within a harsh society. Therapeutic expression through art was thought to contribute to addressing social concerns about the effects of war, economic stress and growing violence and alienation in society. As Freedman (1998: 190) notes, "Students are told that they can express personal meaning through art, to heal themselves through its processes, develop self-confidence through its exhibition, and understand self and others through its viewing." When I attended primary school, in New South Wales in the 60's, art was part of moral education. We would sit in religion and social studies lessons drawing pictures of biblical characters

and famous people who depicted the moral qualities of white, Anglo-Saxon males we should aspire to emulate. As a young child, I was shown commercially produced 'picture study' posters depicting a white mum and dad with a perfect blonde daughter and a freckle-nosed boy playing-out a range of socially valued scenes! This reflected the aims of self-expression as significant to maintaining democratic social order as depicted in the 1952 curriculum (Wales 1952: 357) where art education strived to "bring about an awareness of the part played by Art in a happy life, and a well-ordered society."

To have a therapeutic benefit, it was seen that the creative, artistic process was more significant than the resultant product. References in the syllabuses began to refer to the importance of a creative process. By 1974, the curriculum acknowledges that the teacher has a role in determining the effectiveness of this creative process. It (Wales 1974: 11) states:

> It is held that the idealistic concept of the child as an innate artist who has simply to be given the material in order to create, is false. Art education is a process which involves the acquisition of knowledge, skills, habits and attitudes, and the development of aesthetic sensitivity, none of which can be achieved without the teacher's influence and guidance.

This was further emphasised in the subsequent 1989 syllabus (Education 1989) where the entire document was organised according to a series of experience and process headings. The processes included perceiving, responding, evaluating, organising and manipulating (Education 1989: 16-17). It was felt that the therapeutic value of art could only exist through a process termed 'creative' (Freedman 1987: 80). Freedman (1987: 80) states that "Self-expression through the artistic process was to be included in schools to develop healthy individuals in a psychotherapeutic sense." Creative processes were valued for the effect they would have on the individual. The quality of the artistic experience, rather than the quality of the child's art product was the focus of art education and evaluation of the creative process was determined by "what was believed to be the free expression of the child" (Freedman 1987: 77). The artistic process was perceived to be 'good' for children.

3.7 Art as cognition

In the 1980's art education began to shift to a more discipline and intellectual base. Art educators formed into strong professional bodies which were keen to promote the art discipline. In a reaction to the perceived marginalisation of art as an expressive,

recreational activity, art teachers asserted the intellectual rigour and academic rationales for art education. Associated with this, economic rationalist thinking was questioning the cost effectiveness and value of art in education. There was a shift away from behavioural and emotional rationales for art to more cognitivist approaches. The art eductors argued that art formed a unique way in which mental and intellectual development was communicated through symbolic expression. The student was viewed as a "conscious critical individual" (Lovgren and Sten-Gosta 1998) and child art and creative art movements gave way to notions of art as knowledge and an academic skill. Allied to this, the emphasis on individualisation became subsumed in the need to build knowledge of historical exemplars of best art practice (Greer 1992). The cognitive approach to art moved away from child models to reliance upon studying acclaimed art works as examples of best practice in the discipline. Art curriculum became inspired by art practice. In New South Wales, the 2000 Creative Arts Stages 1-3 syllabus (Wales 2000) makes extensive reference to the study of the work of artists and contextualises child art alongside the art world. The emphasis is on reasoning in preference to a child's personal or spiritual growth. The child art terms such as "wholesome", "imaginative" and "impulses" (Wales 1952: 357) give way to "analytical", "evaluation", "knowledge of form" and "self-criticism" (Wales 2000).

According to this view, cognition and a child's experiences inspire art practice. The 1989 syllabus, specifically listed the types of experiences children need to stimulate cognition and the production of artwork. These included "direct", "intuitive" "remembered", "imagined", "mediated" and "qualities and relationships" (Education 1989: 20-26). The academicism of art meant that children were expected to function as cognisant artists. The process was still important, but it had become the design or problem solving process rather than the 'creative' process. Children were expected to observe, plan, create, develop skills, reflect upon and evaluate their artworks. The teachers' role became to scaffold this process, through the provision of the skills necessary for the children to engage in the problem solving process and through art appreciation to expose the children to examples of quality art that could be used as the basis of critiquing their own work. The adoption of cognitive problem solving required the teacher to plan sequential curriculum and to determine content and processes. The transition to a cognitive view of art was difficult for many teachers who had been trained, and often had school art experiences themselves, during the era of child art and expressionism. They were creative and imaginative, but lacked

understanding of artworks and how to sequence art to expand cognitive inquiry. One response to the cognitive art movement in the United States of America, was the introduction of Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) (Greer 1992). Detailed lesson notes were developed that teachers followed. The teaching materials provided art examples and stressed the importance of art appreciation and critique in art education. Under a disciplined-based approach to art education, "art instruction consists of sequenced content in the four areas of aesthetics, art criticism, art history and art production: such instruction is to be implemented district wide, and student outcomes are to be closely evaluated" (Hamblen and Galanes 1997: 49). DBAE was characterised by an emphasis on instruction in technique and art criticism. Art criticism focused on the fine arts and formal analysis of western art as basic content. The curriculum was clear, detailed and fixed to accommodate standardised contexts. Consideration of the diversity within classrooms or pluralistic society was not accommodated. Curriculum was formulated by panels of art education experts, outside the context of the classroom. Outcomes were preordained and achieved through adherence to instructional structures. The current Creative Arts Stages 1-3 syllabus (Wales 2000) has an equal emphasis on both making and appreciating art, and learning is governed by detailed and staged outcomes.

3.8   Art as visual, aesthetic response

At the commencement of the 20th century, art education in Australia was closely aligned to a European view of aesthetics. Aesthetics was associated with being civilised and cultured. Based on the French and Italian notion that art was a cultural achievement and a visible sign of education and social class, it was felt that study of the fine arts and architecture was a discipline of the mind. Children would study classical styles and art became the epitome of beauty and culture. Artists were admired for technical expertise and formal aesthetic qualities. Studying the aesthetic dimension was seen to enhance the mind and enculturate the children. Artistic learning formed a balance within the school curriculum. The Preface to The Art Reader (Quinn 1905: 3) talks about the importance of developing the aesthetic awareness in the new land of Australia;

> The absence from the curriculum in Australian school of any impressive appeal to
> the artistic instincts of the pupils has been the subject of frequent and regretful
> comment… Of all the visitors to new territory, where Civilization is breaking
> ground, art is the latest as well as the rarest… So far as original effort in the fields
> of Art is concerned, Australia is still in this pioneer stage in the making of a nation;
> but in the case of Australia, the stage need not be so prolonged as it was in other

> countries in days before those who excelled in the production of works of art had mastered the art of faultlessly reproducing their masterpieces. With the aid of the camera, the engraver, and the printing press , it is possible to familiarise children with certain aspects of the beautiful as part of their school training, and to bring an adequate conception of human achievement in art to the boy or girl in the most remote, unlovely bush town.

Quinn's view of aesthetics involves the classical styles of Europe and bemoans the aesthetic of the Australian country town.

The idea of art for aesthetic enrichment was not apparent in the 1952 curriculum (Wales 1952), but had reappeared in a limited form by the 1974 Visual Arts K-6 curriculum (Wales 1974). In this document there is a small section entitled the "Enrichment of the child's aesthetic experience" and apart from writing of the importance of art education emphasising the formal elements and principles of design, it suggests that aesthetic perception is developed through the "consideration of works of art of outstanding merit" resulting in "the child's perception of his world being heightened and intensified, and his sense of identification with his cultural heritage (being) fostered" (Wales 1974: 11). By the time of the 1989 syllabus (Education 1989: 25) aesthetics was more broadly defined to include any mediated image including art works, posters, magazines, story books, advertisements, comics, video, computer graphics, film and television. The notion of a European fine art aesthetic based on outstanding exemplars had disappeared.

The aesthetic agenda reappeared in the 2000 document (Board of Studies 2000), largely inspired by adapting the aesthetic, history and criticism model originating in the DBAE movement. The aim behind aesthetic models of art education was to bring the practices of school art into alignment with the practices of artists. Art education looked to the fine arts community to find models of practice, and academic disciplines such as art critics, historians and sociology informed art education ideals. Allied to this trend, artists-in-residence programs were introduced into schools as a way to foster community interest in aesthetic inquiry and to provide professional models for the children.

Transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary studies were also introduced into the school curriculum in the belief that education could occur through the arts and aesthetic structures could be applied to other areas of the curriculum.

3.9   Art as symbolic communication

The introduction of television and the increased push to global communication focused attention on the communicative and symbolic aspects of art. Symbols can be used to effectively communicate information, knowledge and beliefs. Art communicates through non-discursive means using a visual vocabulary that is expressive, cultural and symbolic. What we see is a major part of what we know and visual communication can help us to "see what we see and to know what we know" (Horn 1998). Guttegno (Horn 1998: 252) indicates the efficiency and magnificence of visual communication;

> Sight is swift comprehensive, simultaneously analytic and synthetic. It requires so little energy to function, as it is does, at the speed of light, that it permits our minds to receive and hold an infinite number of items of information in a fraction of second. With sight, infinites are given at once; wealth is in its description.

Guttegno's comment accentuates the significance of visual communication. Herbert Read (1970) saw the potential of visual communication as a medium for effective international exchange. He considers art as providing, "A language of symbols that communicate meaning without hindrance from country to country across the centuries" (Read 1970: 233). Read could not have foreseen the impact of computer technology and the World Wide Web and the manner in which it foregrounds visual communication. New technologies are promoting new codes of communication. Human communication has always been made up of multiple codes, but as information needs become more complex, diverse, deep and extensive, humans are developing more simple ways to communicate that can make connections between increasingly complex forms. To this extent, technology comes into focus as a meeting place for multiple codes of communication, including, the representational, the iconographic, the compositional and the narrative.

In recent times there has been a growing interest in what is being termed visual "literacy". The use of the literacy metaphor is recognition of the complexity of "reading" the visual. It is about the "art" of reading, the "art of speaking" and the "art" of gaining meaning from images. Art education has had to work in an interdisciplinary way with other curriculum areas to help children read and understand the visual symbols that are used to communicate the complexities of life. Art is used for conveying information and as a powerful language for arousing social and cultural consciousness.

The first awareness of the symbolic power of art appears in the 1974 curriculum (Wales 1974). This document has a section on visual language, and while the focus is on formal properties (Wales 1974: 23), it does acknowledge that the "artist expresses his thoughts and feelings about things in terms of a visual language." The focus in art education at this point was still on children studying the formal elements as a way to enhance their artmaking. No consideration was given to socio-cultural readings of symbols or the way in which knowledge may be constructed in visual symbols. Interestingly, the subsequent 1989 and 2000 syllabus (Education 1989; Board of Studies 2000; Wales 2000) do not mention the communicative or symbolic aspect nor is there any mention of visual literacy.

3.10 Art as a cultural agent

The notion of art as a cultural agent is embodied in the view that tradition and aesthetic 'taste' can be nurtured through art. In this conception, the role of the teacher is as a mediator of culture, bringing to children socially accepted models of good taste and a sense of beauty with the idea that cultural refinement and discernment can be taught. This belief is founded on the view that the development of taste and an awareness of cultural heritage are essential aspects of understanding human experience and establishing a cultural identity. With a belief that art education assists the development of cultural awareness there is a recognition of art as a force for civilising humanity. The cultural aim of art education reflects the significance of art as a legacy of historical civilisation and national heritage. In this way, art becomes a political force. Freedman (1998: 187) notes, "Art education has been influenced by political initiatives, social priorities and cultural crises." As a political agent, art has been used as a nationalising force and powerful propaganda. Art education transmits national identity and culture. Freedman and Hernandez (1998: 182) note, "art in school has been used to promote national agendas, support social ideals and apply social principles."

Allied to this approach, is the view that democratisation of culture can be achieved through art education. Traditionally, art education has been seen as a sign of cultivation usually confined to the middle and upper classes. Under a democratic curriculum all children receive cultural education, especially in relation to developing an appreciation of fine arts, in the belief that such inclusions assist in ensuring social equity. Freedman (1998: 187)

notes, "To be thought of as knowledgeable in the past meant that one understood and appreciated the arts… as a vital part of culture." The forward in The Art Reader (Quinn 1905) suggests that this text will bring the fine arts and culture to the 'masses'. The Art Reader (Quinn 1905: 4) argues, "The vast majority of the children educated in our state and private schools step straight from the senior classes into the world. Comparatively few enjoy the privilege of pursuing their studies at the University." Quinn believed that other than those students attending university, the majority of Australian students were otherwise unlikely to be exposed to the cultural history existent in art. It should be noted, that in 1904, this culture was totally European, fine arts and architecture (Quinn 1905). The 1952 curriculum (Wales 1952: 372) mentions briefly the need to cultivate an appreciation of beauty through an attractive classroom, where suitable examples of art, fabric and pottery should be included. The syllabi during the dominant child art and process models (Wales 1974; Education 1989) makes no mention of art as a cultural artefact. The 2000 Creative Arts Stages 1-3 syllabus (Board of Studies 2000) emphasises a strong cultural and national identity perspective. In the rationale, the syllabus (Board of Studies 2000: 6-7) states that art provides;

> People with opportunities to explore social and cultural values about the spiritual and worldly beliefs in Australia… the pluralistic values of Australian cultures… (artworks) that relate to the histories and traditions of these artforms… students the opportunity to interpret certain aspects of the world…. Investigations of the world… how the world is interpreted… assists students to participate in and contribute to cultural life…to respect the views of various social and cultural groups, (to respect the views) of different religions and social groups… people with disabilities… females and males.

The rationale and aims in the current syllabus are dominated by views of art as a proactive social agent. This reflects the influence of social sciences and politics in the fine arts community and the view that art can display and challenge social ideals and exemplify social constructions of the self as artist within a cultural context. This idea may originate from Dewey's (1934) view of art as the expression of the relationship between material, process and ideal. The artwork exists as the embodied realisation of the interaction between people and their environment. Dewey extended the idea of self-expression to include notions of social intent in the artist's work. This approach values the role of social and historical structures in impacting on the artist, providing both a medium for action and creation, while at the same time serving as a constraining tension in an artists' work. This foreshadowed the development of the postmodernist movement, which realised the

inappropriateness of formalist aspects such as line, shape and colour when looking at the artwork of different cultures. For example, within the Australian culture, it is impossible to interpret Aboriginal art without considering the social, spiritual and political context in which it is made.

Art also emerged in the post second world war baby boomers as an expression for youth and alternative culture. Young people saw visual symbolism as a way of forging an identity. Youth culture challenged the models of a dominant culture and instead began to create art, forming a cultural unity through art. The expressive powers of art allowed counter groups to push agendas of cultural change. The aesthetic values of adults were questioned and the growing leisure market, fuelled by an affluent youth market led to an explosion in visual culture apparent in everything from sports shoes to hair colour! This change is apparent in the 1989 Visual Arts K-6 syllabus (Education 1989: 25) that suggests children should be studying visual exemplars including, "posters, advertisements, comics, videos, computer graphics, film and television" as part of the art education program. Such suggestions were premised on the belief that traditional fines arts examples no longer engaged children or reflected their cultural values. Interestingly, the current syllabus (Board of Studies 2000) has returned in its content and outcomes to a greater focus on tradition. For example, for stage two (Board of Studies 2000: 57) the document refers to the importance of studying "landscape traditions", "figurative traditions", and "different traditions and techniques".

3.11 Postmodernism

Postmodernism is not a definable paradigm but rather reflects a critical redirection of art tradition. The term postmodernism was first used by Federico de Oris in the 1930's to indicate a minor reaction to the modernist trends of the time (Featherstone 1991). From this beginning, postmodernism emerged as a significant aspect of contemporary art practice. Bernstein (1993) argues that the label 'postmodernism' tends to obscure rather than clarify understandings of postmodern trends. He (Bernstein 1993: 204) argues that postmodernism is "amorphous and elusive… difficult to pin down and to characterise." Bernstein (1993: 205) further argues that postmodernism is obsessed with fragments being "vague, ambiguous and slippery" and is about imagination and intuition. Postmodernism implies the centrality of culture in any interpretation of art by considering critical and

cultural analysis as being more significant than formal analysis. Adopting a democratic social code of discourse, there is a breaking down of barriers between art, everyday experiences, the fine arts and popular culture. The expansion of technology challenges notions of originality with a shift from the productive to the reproductive. From this stance, all art is reproduction.

Postmodernism is characteristic of multiple realities. Ideas from different individuals and cultures can be accommodated within an increasingly pluralistic society.   Postmodernism is inherently a political act as there is rarely agreement or a dominant argument. In particular, postmodernism challenges the positions of power held by historical narratives. Postmodernism strives to find the radical and the marginalised and sees art as being a form of rebellion against oppression by dominant groups. To do this, postmodernism both draws on tradition and challenges its status. As Bernstein (1993: 215) indicates, "We cannot question or shake traditional ethical and political claims without at the same time drawing upon these traditional claims". In this way postmodernism exists as " a critique of historical narratives; postmodernism as a critique of the myth of originality; and postmodernism as a critique of the grounds of difference" (Harrison and Wood 1992: 989). Therefore, a postmodernist critique is conditional and rarely transparent. This complexity is apparent when Bernstein (1993) writes; "The postmodernists continue to try and think what has remained unthought, but they abandon the idea that the unthought can be made completely transparent." In this way, postmodernism recasts art as being socially and personally bound and defies any definitive picture of art as an object.

This view became apparent when Marcel Duchamp's "readymades" became accepted as art. The artist had moved from being image creator to image presenter. Inherent in notions of presentation is the belief that art exists not solely as an object, but as a communicative relationship between the art and the viewer. Artists have adopted an anti-image stance. A lack of interest in formal properties and concepts of "blackness" means that didactic cues are used to promote associative interpretations of images. The artist produces a work and shapes the observer's response to the work. In this way, postmodernism emphasises multiple interpretations and the work of art can now exist only in and through its interpretations. Each viewer constructs a personal interpretation of the work, and thus the artwork exists as a construction of the perceiver, who may create markedly different

'readings' of a single work (Efland 1995). As art exists in its reading, postmodernism defies formal analysis. Analysis instead focuses on relationships and interrelationships, issues of social and personal transformations, and semiotics and deconstruction rather than on the art object itself. Art objects become uncertain places, undefined, confused and relationship bound. Skills and technology are less important and intentions and meanings are more important. Diamond and Mullen (1999: 22) note:

> Postmodernists replace the idea of a single radiating self as a stable, unified, conscious subject with that of a lightheaded, fluid, constantly changing community of multiple selves with struggles within and for consciousness.

Making art therefore exists as a construction of inner thoughts. Images are no longer merely functions of form. Postmodernism is about sensed experience that is personal, individual, emotional and provocative. Diamond (1999: 424) argues that in postmodernist art, "The strict linearity of plot is suspended and any organised story elements or design must be invented by the reader as they confront an intriguing mixture of genres and representations." In this way, the creation of self and the reading of the artwork are based on the work being invested with certain characteristics and readings, which may be highly personal and non-generalisable. Artworks do not only exist for what they are, but also for the function they perform in a social context. Jeffers (1996: 7) argues, art functions as a "metaphor for the relationship between viewer, artist and piece". In this way, postmodernist aesthetics is tied to personal experiences and meanings. Foster (1983: x) contends that postmodernist art practice, "is not defined in relation to a given medium… but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms." The study of postmodernist art from a critical aesthetic standpoint is based on the sociology of knowledge and sociopolitical meanings. It requires the examination of cultural and textual issues. Foster (1983: xii) further contends that "a resistant postmodernism is concerned with a critical deconstruction of tradition." One of these traditions challenged is the position of authoritative or expert interpretations. Postmodernism rejects notions of universal or privileged interpretation, preferring interpretations based on personal experiences and acceptance of the coexistence of multiple positions and competing narratives.

The claim that postmodernism is more about presentational than formal structures, does not imply a reaction to covert modernist structures. Postmodernism simply occurred after modernism (Smith 1995) and responded to the economic, administrative and aesthetic

rationalism that differentiated the social world of the modernist era.   Postmodernism does not negate historical and cultural influences but rather subsumes these into a multiplicity of traditions and histories. It assumes that all political preferences have a right to be heard and that no traditions or histories are inherently superior or privileged.

It can also be argued that postmodernism is not so much a theory about art but rather the way life is now. Life is about computerisation, internationalisation, tele-visuals, mass media, Americanisation, mass marketing and hyperreality. The world has itself become more real than real and this hyper reality undermines some of the fundamental theories that have informed art practice. For example, cultural awareness is often used as a rationale for art education, yet what is culture in the World Wide Web? Similarly "beauty" is often seen as a pivotal point in defining aesthetics, yet in a world of enhanced images, falsification and digitalisation, architects of beauty are able to modify personal perceptions of image and beauty. What we know and who we are is being controlled by the visual world. Life is intensely aesthetic and so art is merely doing what it has always done, in that it mirrors the society in which it exists.

Postmodernism is a relatively new concept and its emergence as an influence in art education is somewhat unclear. The current syllabus (Board of Studies 2000) shows some acknowledgment of postmodernist issues. In particular, it endorses the importance of minority visual discourses such as those of women and indigenous people. There is recognition of new and eclectic art forms and the role of artists' intentions in the construction of artworks. There is identification of the way audience and viewers interact with works. Furthermore there is acknowledgment in the glossary of the syllabus of the complexity of representation (Board of Studies 2000: 110) in art. This definition adopts a postmodernist perspective, stressing tentativeness and uncertainty. It states that representation involves (Board of Studies 2000: 110):

> A mental operation on the part of the artist where certain qualities of an idea of the world are referred to and used to produce another idea. An artwork is a representation of an idea/aspect of the world….The making of an artwork is uncertain before it is made, involves evaluative action and needs to be made sense of both by the artist and he audience within the conventions of this form.

This definition is in itself interesting because it contains postmodernist ideals but concludes with a statement more aligned to a view that there are historical conceived forms that

contain predetermined conventions and that artistic practice lies within these. This confusion reflects an aspect of postmodernism in that a multiplicity of seemingly contradictory statements can coexist within one discourse.

While syllabus documentation continues to struggle with the impact of postmodernism on art education, postmodernism both reflects and is reflected by, youth culture. Youth culture has its own artforms and disrupts dominant adult analysis and critique. It is a visual explosion filtering into the whole youth detonation that must inevitably change the way teachers consider art education. Lovgren and Karlson (1998: 106) signify the ways mass media and technology are dissolving traditional aesthetic boundaries and framing new knowledges for art education:

> The fast development of the mass-media industry with music videos and popular culture has demanded a growing need for democracy in teaching. In art this will mean the development of knowledge about newer media, such as video, computer graphics and graffiti.

This comment reflects the likely impact of visual communication on art education. Keifer-Boyd (1996: 37) argues that as art disciplines change so must art education. Art education needs to encourage enlightenment whereby children make connections and expand visual conceptions, critically reflecting on visual representations of knowledge and definitions of beauty. Under the influence of postmodernism, art education cannot rely on accepted assumptions about the nature of art, children's artistic development and teaching practices. Frange (1998: 110) argues that, "art and art teaching in our present time - if we are to accept post-modern theory- are beyond words, as there is an incorporation of actions, intuitions, interlineations, and deep and time consuming quests." Smith (1995) further contends that:

> Extreme postmodernism compromises any case that could be made for art education. Since it posits neither a characteristic function nor a unique value for art, it provides no reason for teaching it.

The challenge facing art education is the way it adapts to cope with changing social issues and adopts a critical perspective on what constitutes art of cultural significance and to develop a rationale for teaching art within a climate of postmodernism that challenges the need for art education.

This chapter has presented the main historical contexts that impact on Australian primary art education. The purpose of these is to present a context for the analysis of the conversations of the accomplished teachers. It will be reflected upon when critiquing the conversations of the teachers and determining the influence of a range of historical discourses on the beliefs and practices that underpin the qualities of the accomplished art teachers. This chapter has emphasised the way in which art is viewed in different ways. The accomplished teachers' responses embody many of these perceptions to some degree and these responses were clearly discernible in the conversations with the teachers. In this way, this historical influences chapter provides both a valuable framework and a tool for analysis of the teachers' conversations. The following chapter outlines the research methodology adopted for this study.

4   Research methodology

In quilting the rules are often uncertain and contradictory
(Hinson 1966: 53)

4.1   Introduction

This chapter positions the study within an artistic paradigm. It explores the nature of critical appreciative inquiry and argues why it is an appropriate method of inquiry for this study. Lincoln (1988) identifies four major "choice points" that have bearing on the shape of the research; those of paradigm choice, methodology choice, methods choice and perspective choice. Of these, the most significant for me was that of paradigm choice, as I believe that this dictated the other three choices. The choice of a paradigm emerged from the purpose of the study and my background as a teacher, artist and researcher.

4.2   Purpose

Every research undertaking is motivated by a purpose that shapes the research design. I was aware that primary art teachers are rarely given the opportunity to engage in critical dialogue about art education and visual arts in the primary school. Furthermore, this research was founded on my belief that teaching is an art, and accomplished art teachers are artists. High quality teaching can justifiably be called art, as there is a strong link between

the nature of art and teaching. Both teaching and art are expressive activities that are evidence of skilled performance. Art and teaching can be used to present ideas in a range of forms that are able to convey meaning and promote transforming experiences. Similarly, both art and teaching are mediated and determined by specific social situations and can only be judged on the basis of qualities that unfold during presentation or process. This view is supported by Galbraith (1997: 16) who contends that "Teaching art and the art of teaching is complicated and subtle". Certainly, not all teaching can be called 'art' but accomplished teaching is a beautiful and aesthetic experience. Flinders and Eisner (1994: 344) note "What distinguishes skilled teaching – its intellectual, social, personal and political achievements- are no less subtle than what distinguishes a beautiful painting or good literature". This thesis focused on the appreciation of truly beautiful teaching and concentrated on the artists, that is, the accomplished primary teachers, who create artistic teaching. The assumption underlying this approach was that studying these accomplished teachers and their practice was equivalent to studying artworks and artists at work. Flinders (1994: 344) argues that the study of the artistic dimensions of teaching has the potential to, "enhance effectiveness and model some of our most valued forms of human intelligence". The choice of research methodology was therefore prefaced on the axiom that both "the art of teaching and the teaching of art should be complementary" (Grauer 1999: 22).

I also hoped from an ethical standpoint, that both the participants and myself would gain some benefit from engaging in the research process. To this end, I wanted to promote a community of researchers where the researcher and teachers work democratically to establish an agenda for future art education practices in primary teacher education. The choice of an arts-based methodology was motivated by the desire to obtain authentic information about the nature of practice of accomplished art teachers and to use this information to inform preservice teacher education strategies in art education. Art should be researched using a methodology that can be characterised as being artistic. I was keen to promote artistic forms of research as trustworthy, sympathetic and authentic methodology for researching the people and situation surrounding art education. Courtney (1997: 45) writes of the need for clear links between the type of methodology used and the nature of art education practices:

> To fully appreciate arts education, the researcher must have developed the capacity
> to imaginatively grasp and respond to complex interactions specifically in the arts,
> in teaching and in learning, and in education as a whole.

This research is a process of formulating future aims rather than necessarily answering current problems. It combined my directions and perceived purposes, with the emergent concerns and issues of the accomplished teachers. This open-ended approach to research was more orientated towards journeys than discoveries and was about insight rather than focus. Flinders and Eisner (1994: 350) note, "Educational critics… are pulled in a different direction. Their work is informed by artistic traditions that seek to recognise exemplary practice." In this way, the methods used are more about looking than about finding. Allied to purpose, methodology was also strongly linked to the personality, artistic preferences and chosen position of the researcher.

4.3   Positioning

I am a woman, with views on the ways that women approach the gaining of knowledge. I am an artist and consider myself artistic and creative, and so I position my ideas from the long tradition of artists and artistic explorations. From a young age, much to my mother's frustration as she tried to tidy my room, I would be on the other side of the room with scissors, glue and crayons making art and a mess! Artistic ability was not encouraged at my school, where the view prevailed that it was unintellectual, and for the 'kids who couldn't do any thing else'. Yet I won a local art contest as a ten-year-old and that motivated me to think I was a good artist and that art was something to pursue. Similarly, as a teenager I experienced the power of the arts as an expressive medium when I was taken to the 'Modern Masters' exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Throughout my tertiary education, postgraduate studies and employment, I continue to follow an artistic pathway. My artistic and research self are one and the same.

This background shapes my thinking about research and influences my choice of an aesthetic paradigm for conducting this investigation. This aligns with the observation Eisner (1998: 1) makes of his own background when he comments "my life as a painter is intimately related to the ways in which I think about inquiry." Finlay and Knowles (1995: 125) emphasise the significance of the researcher's background and experiences in selection of a research paradigm. They write, "The locations of our experiences, the

experiences of our worlds, and the place of art in the development of our artistic and researching selves - have profoundly influenced our thinking and being." The way in which I conceived this research, responded to the conversations with the accomplished teachers and interpreted what was seen and heard are extensions of my artistic vision and my thinking as a woman. This research investigation was approached from an artistic standpoint. As would be done with a painting, I planned, visualised, experimented, played, layered, reacted, responded and evaluated. The research method chosen reflects my passions and ideologies and has the power to move me and is deserving of prolonged engagement and a level of excitement. The research has art education as a subject matter and was conceived as a creative and artistic undertaking. This reflected my experiences and beliefs. Finlay and Knowles (1995: 138) describe the artistic research underpinnings resulting from their early experiences of art:

> Our childhoods, immensely powerful for the ways in which our minds were impressed by notions of the artistic and the aesthetic, continue to play out in many facets of our thinking about researching. We have discovered that these early artistic and everyday experiences have made a difference in the way we think about perception, interpretation, and forms and media, and in our research.

While perhaps not traditional in educational research to justify choice of paradigm in terms of childhood experiences, my participation in visual arts alters the way I view the world and was inherent to the way I approached this study.

Culturally and historically I feel this study was conducted in a time when research serves to present multiple realities and expose layers of interpretation. So the study was positioned as postmodern in its intent as it assumes a critical perspective, presenting different views and interpretations of events and conversations. I acknowledge the contingent character of my position within the research design and clarify the manner in which my perceived self-identity determines my choices of action (Nadesan and Elenes 1998). Postionality and standpoint were significant aspects of this investigation for the reasons Lincoln (1995: 9) identifies in her writing:

> The post-structural, postmodern argument that texts, any texts, are always partial, incomplete, socially, culturally, historically, radically and sexually located, and can therefore never represent any truth except those truths which exhibit the same characteristics.

This view emphasises the need for the reader to be positioned in the study. The reader becomes an active collaborator in making meaning and form part of the fibre of the research fabric. The reader inevitably enters into my thoughts and the artistic conceptions underpinning this research design.

4.4   Art-based methodology

This study was based not only within the discipline of art, but also within a paradigm of artistic research methodology. The methodology selected recognises art as a powerful instrument for human insight (Langer 1957). It was the premise of this study that art is a structure for research through which understanding can be organised. Art-based research methodology (Anderson 1991; Eisner 1991; Anderson 1993; Eisner 1998) is a form of qualitative inquiry that originates in the practices of art professionals. Its guiding axioms are rooted in art practice. The choice of paradigm and assumed axioms is governed by the personality of the researcher and of the perceived 'fit' of the axioms to a particular research situation. As an artist, I felt immediately comfortable with an artistic form of inquiry. I have experience conducting critique and review of artworks based on case studies. These case studies have been framed from historical, cultural and personal perspectives and grounded in critical practices. The feeling of a strong affinity with a particular research methodology was a significant aspect governing the choice of approach. As Denzin (1998: 162) notes: "The personality of the researcher helps to determine his or her selection of topics, his or her intellectual approach and his or her ability in the field." As the focus of this research was on teachers as artists, and accomplished art teaching as a work of art, the axioms of artistic research seemed to have greatest utility for the phenomenon explored in this study. This view is supported by other researchers in art education (Beittel 1973; Eisner 1991; Anderson 1993; Finlay and Knowles 1995; Carroll 1997; Collins and Sandell 1997; Courtney 1997; Eisner 1998; Kincheloe and McLaren 1998). Boughton (1999: 61) writes of the need to research art education with research approaches that are intrinsic to the field. He argues that "In order for curriculum to become both problem and discipline centred, the professional scholars in art, the artists, the critics, and the historians would be the models for inquiry."

Art research methodology is very fluid and responsive, and can be both simple and highly complex. It is about making observations involving both looking in and looking out.

Throughout this study, the art methodology developed character and substance and was not totally preconceived. Picasso was quoted as saying (Sullivan 1999: 8) "A painting is not thought out and decided beforehand. Whilst it is in the making, it changes as each of our thoughts may change." However, it should not be assumed that art research approaches lack context, tradition or clarity. By contrast, Tierney (1993: 3) contends that knowledge, ideology and culture are inextricably linked in an art-based approach to research. Courtney (1997: 7) argues that "Beliefs and assumptions about the nature and purpose of art, education and arts education bind artistic inquiry." Art-based methodology is characterised by immense diversity, linked to the attitudes and judgements made by the researcher within a particular context.

The particular form of art-based inquiry used in this study, was a model of criticism that stresses an appreciation of art teachers and their teaching. This appreciation involved attaching value as the result of inquiry. Value in art is a problematic concept as art values are not fixed and cannot be assumed. Indeed, it is the role of art criticism to challenge values. Questions of value are particularly prevalent in the writing of feminist art critics, who stress the contextual nature of value. Bourdieu (1994: 56) writes of art as being "an object which exists as such only by the virtue of the collective belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art." This quote emphasises the contextual and socio-cultural nature of value and the way meaning for artworks exists within central concepts that unify and reflect particular localised contexts.

The artistic form of inquiry used for this study was concerned not only with the documentation and appreciation of the ideas and actions of a group of accomplished teachers, but also the usefulness of this information to imaginings of future preservice art teacher education practices. Eisner (1995: 102) writes: "artistically crafted narratives have become increasingly important both as sources of understanding teaching by researchers and as resources that teachers might use to improve their own teaching." One of the distinguishing features of both educational and artistic research, according to Wilson (1997: 1), is that it relates *what is* with what *might be* and what *ought to be*. In this research, art-based inquiry is recognised as a communicative action that is capable of translating ideas. Courtney (1997: 38) suggests that it is the imaginative nature of this communication that distinguishes artistic research and allows communication of what *might* happen. This

imaginative aspect of art-based research makes it particularly appropriate to the purposes of this inquiry. As Cassirer (1974: 12) stresses, "Art… teaches us to visualise, not merely to conceptualize or utilize, things. Art gives us a richer, more vivid and colourful image of reality and a more profound insight into its formal structure."

Art-based methodology is a self-reflexive process, involving critical dialogue. This research aimed to "study human experience from the ground up, from the point of interacting individuals who, together and alone, make live histories that have been handed down from the ghosts of the past" (Denzin and Lincoln 1998: 427). The approach adopted was premised on the axiom that nothing is linear or step-wise; instead, everything comes with a rush of dynamic simultaneity. This was evident in all phases of the research.

4.5   Artistic perception

My background as someone passionate about art, combined with the axioms of both the critical aesthetic and qualitative research paradigms, influence the methodology in this study. The method used was reliant upon artistic perception. It was assumed that artistic perception is a form of human comprehension that allows insight into the nature of accomplished art teachers' views and art education practices.

Artistic research is most appropriately defined through synonyms. The Oxford Thesaurus (Kirkpatrick 1994) uses words such as 'imaginative', 'sensitive' and 'cultivated' when referring to inherent artistic characteristics. Artistic understandings are also associated with the 'unconventional' and the 'nonconformist.' The definition of the word 'aesthetic' that applies to the nature of this research is derived from the Greek, 'aisthetikos', related to perceptible things (Pearsall 1998). Rather than seeing aesthetics as being solely concerned with things of beauty, the implication of the word origins express notions of perception. Aesthetics is both objective (an ideal object) and a quality of the mind (a way people think). For the purposes of this research, an aesthetic research methodology involved both these conceptions, as it is a quality of mind that informed the study and a quest for beautiful and objective things, in the form of better teacher education practices for future art educators. It is difficult to be more definitive about 'artistic' and 'aesthetic' understandings as it is inherent that such terms are dynamic and elusive. Lucimer Bella Perveira (1998: 107) writes:

> Art consolidates and manifests itself paradigmatically- ethically- politically, where to be ethical is to dwell in the here and now, to be aesthetic is to invent and reinvent the world as a work of art based on philosophical concepts, and to be political is to deploy imagination as an instrument of war against malignant forces.

The method adopted an artistic perspective. Eisner (1997) champions the recognition of the arts as a valuable research method. He reflects on the way art has been excluded as a valid form of human inquiry when he states that, "the idea that the arts would provide a basis for doing research is itself regarded by more than a few as an oxymoronic notion" (Eisner 1997: 260). Since the beginning of human existence, the arts have been used to represent and shape experiences. Denzin (1992) claims that, art has always been a cultural, political and ideological form of experiential inquiry. He argues that art, as an approach to research, provide a qualitatively different manner in which to perceive and respond. Artistic research methodologies provide insightful and culturally bound models for education inquiry. Denzin (1992: 135) notes:

> Unlike ordinary experience, with its routine flow, the encounter with an art object produces a vivid, complex, interactional experience which is emotional, cognitive, with the environment in new ways. This experience is rhythmic, expressive, and fulfilling; it has a sense of unity and completeness.

Artistic models of investigation involve settings, conditions and thinking habits that promote personal reflection and imagination of new possibilities. Artistic perception does not bracket out the affective domains but rather sees personal growth as an inherently positive feature. Langer (1957:71) commenting on artistic perception, claims that it is "the only way we can really envisage vital movement, the stirring and growth and passage of emotion and ultimately the whole direct sense of human life, is in artistic terms". This quote signals the importance of emotion in research design and underscores the value of holistic research methods where the researcher engages all dimensions of herself in the process of making meaning. This search for meaning strives for the goal of improving practice in preservice art education. That is not to separate artistic inquiry from scientific forms of understanding. Ironically, the arts and sciences have been closely linked throughout time, and it is only in modern times that the attainment of understanding has differentiated and prioritised these complementary forms of understanding. Eisner (1995: 5) laments:

> It is ironic that qualities as fundamental and powerful as those that constitute art have been so neglected in the discourse of research methodology. We academics have made such a sharp differentiation between art and science that we believe

social science has nothing to do with art. This view not only reveals a parochial conception of art, it reveals a distorted view of science.

Artistic perception as a research tool recognises imagination as an important dimension of human consciousness. Langer (1957: 68) describes artistic perception as starting with "an intuition of total import, and increases by contemplation as the expressive articulation of the form becomes apparent." An artistic approach to research adopts the Kantian idea that perception entails more than just seeing (Hamilton 1994). Artistic perception in this study implied a depth of looking involving the eyes, the heart and the intuition. The topic was something that I had known for a large part of my life. Artistic perception, as a methodology, required me to 'unsee' what I have always seen, and to interrogate my perceptions and the qualities that I assume I perceive. Eisner (1998: 77) cautions, "learning to see what we have learned not to notice remains one of the most critical and difficult tasks."

Aesthetic inquiry is complex, rich and responsive. Finlay and Knowles (1995: 110) note that aesthetic inquiry never takes precisely the same course, nor does it wind up in the same place. Given the inherent complexities of trying to proffer artistic perception as a method, I have not presented a set of generalised principles, but the following list highlights the main qualities of aesthetic inquiry as used in this research:

a) Openness to expressiveness and awareness of what a thing feels like as well as how it might be seen. This characteristic recognised that expressiveness was something that can be apprehended but not necessarily demonstrated;

b) Recognition that ideas could be presented both realistically, that is, in an openly observable manner, and abstractly, through a range of symbols or processes;

c) Realisation that insight and intuition were fundamental aspects of aesthetic perception;

d) Notions of artistic perception being an act of mediation where insights and observations were compiled into meaningful relationships;

e) Acknowledgment that perception resulted from inferences made as a result of sensations and reflections initiated by contacts with the data;

f) Views of aesthetic perception as being a physical, affective and intellectual activity where insight was made through a holistic process;

g) Knowledge presented in the form of abstraction and exemplification;

h) Views of perception that were historically and culturally located; and

i) Appreciation that artistic perception remains embedded in cultural values, patterns of discourse and social structures.

Underlying each of these characteristics was the assumption that sensation, feeling and thought all operate as one. The aesthetic experience is inherently a form of emotionality. Denzin (1992:135) contends, artistic perception is a:

> Believed in, situated, temporally embodied experience that radiates through a person's stream of consciousness, is felt and runs through the body, and in the process of being lived, plunges the person into a world that is wholly constituted by the emotional-aesthetic experience.

Emotion was fundamental to the research design and highly desirable in terms of the likely research outcomes. Denzin (1989: 12) considers emotionality to be an essential component of research that should not be bracketed out:

> It (emotionality) is present in the moods and feelings persons bring to the study. It is present in the lives of those who are studied. It is present in the interactions that go on between researcher and subjects. It is present in the observations that are gathered. It is part of power and being powerful, or powerless.

Further to this view is the notion that artistic perception is about the chances and possibilities inherent in the world. The future is not a repetition of the past. The combination of sensation, emotion and intuition form the basis of how we interpret and transform our world. Jung (1964: 61) argues that, "sensation tells you that something exists, thinking tells you what it is; feeling tells you whether it is agreeable or not; and intuition tells you whence it comes and where it is going." While agreeing with some of the sentiments expressed in this quote, I would comment further suggesting that artistic perception, as applied to this study, was a holistic process that allowed these processes to interact. Sensation, thinking, feeling and intuition are inseparable aspects in aesthetic inquiry, and work in an interconnected manner.

A final significant aspect of artistic perception that delineates it from other forms of inquiry is the importance of a sense of 'play'. Play is not generally a part of educational research, but in this study, the elements of play dramatically altered the research investigation. Courtney (1997) argues that play is a very important part of contemporary thinking about thinking. Cassirer (1974) reasons that through play it is possible to leave behind the

boundaries of empirical givens, in order to give the world a new shape. Artists play with ideas and materials to challenge their current skills and ideas and to strive for greater clarity of insight or meaning. Similarly, seemingly objectiveless play in research allows the researcher to clarify understandings and retain a sense of vitality and feeling towards the research investigation. Eisner (1998) argues that play is an intellectual activity at its highest level. Throughout each stage of this research I have attempted to retain a sense of creative playfulness. This served to invigorate my sometimes lagging levels of energy and allowed for moments of unconstrained exploration and discovery. However, such a notion of play should not be interpreted as a lack of rigour in the process of inquiry.

4.6   Assumptions in the selection of research paradigm.

A number of assumptions and limitations are associated with any research that proposes to imagine a future. The vision of a future framework is presupposed by the notion that a depth art curriculum is possible and that art learning is teachable. It is assumed in this study that new methods might nurture and cultivate critical reflection within preservice art education. It is also assumed that the setting of priorities and a research framework may assist in the development of art education pedagogy.

The main assumption underlying the selection of research paradigm was that scholarly investigation is a complex personal and social process. Lather (1987) contends that ways of knowing are inherently culture-bound and perspectival, and research is about striving for ways of knowing that do justice to the complexity, tenuity and indeterminacy of human experience. Creative and interpretive models of inquiry provide a multiplicity of ways of knowing. Courtney (1997: 27) argues that; "Today there is a plurality of ways of knowing. Inquiry is essentially a perspective on people, things or events… We cannot produce an absolute answer to a question or find only one rule for action". This multiplicity of ways of knowing exists within a socio-cultural framework. You cannot isolate knowledge from the context that produces it. Lincoln (1988: 1) notes that research is a:

> Human enterprise, carried on inside of political and social systems and cannot step outside itself or those who perform it. It is therefore a value-bound, value-determined, context situated and ideologically loaded enterprise.

It was assumed that an art-based research paradigm was an appropriate and valid form of inquiry for this study. I support Mason's (1991) view that in general, teachers have an antipathy to positivist enterprises that tend to dominate educational research and that an approach that aims to listen and see in an in-depth fashion is more acceptable to teacher participants. Similarly, while art-based research methodology has been chosen as having greatest applicability to this study, it is not viewed as the single, correct methodology. Methodology both positively and negatively influences the scope and vision of a thesis. Eisner (1995: 101) cautions that "there is a growing realization that theoretical structures have their own inherent limitations and that matters of representation count in the way in which understanding is generated."

This study reinforced the notion that truth is not a given or absolute. Similarly knowledge is dependent on perspective, space and time. This thesis represented a descriptive narrative that allowed issues to be foregrounded and patterns to emerge. Courtney (1997: 24) cautions in relation to research that:

> Inquiry is a matter of highly informed guessing… certainty has been replaced by guessing or pretending to know… truth is relative to the researcher's point of view – two ways of acting may be equally valid. Our mental structures decide how we order any kinds of experience.

Like a good artwork, there are no simple predictable patterns. Aligned to both the research and critique agendas, this study was descriptive in nature and strives to "describe and expound upon the meanings and qualities of work" within art education (Flinders and Eisner 1994: 344).

The final assumption was that there is a link between the type of methodology selected and the nature of the discipline being investigated. Just as one would not judge a design brief for a chair against the same criteria as one might judge a watercolour painting, the nature of the investigative procedures used should align to the characteristics of what is being studied. As this study was positioned within the education and art disciplines it seems most appropriate to use an art-based model of inquiry. Such an approach allowed for recognition of contextual and historical aspects of practice and reflections on the significance of the learning environment. As with understanding an artwork, art-based methodologies endorse

the investigation of both the individual and the universal simultaneously and accommodate the layers of meaning that are difficult to operationalise in more linear research approaches.

There are also particular delimitations associated with the art-based approach used. Firstly, it was recognised that art teaching reflects highly complex social issues and that no single model can be developed that can 'answer a given problem'. This research challenged the idea that educational research is about asking defined questions and seeking 'an answer' or 'answers' to those questions. This research articulates better questions for research in the future. However, having stated this position, I still feel it was significant that this research was not just about conversations and critique, but also contained imaginative and pragmatic visions for a range of possible futures for teacher education. Wilson (1997: 5) cautions, "It is extremely easy to play the role of the critic as far as art education is concerned. It is much more difficult to make positive suggestions for improvement within the field." However, it is clear at the outset of this research that, as Guba and Lincoln (1989) indicate, change cannot be engineered. Change is a non-linear process that involves people in a continuous process of 'constructing' new and sophisticated information. Simply applying a rigid model, or reproducing the conceptual map of the lecturer in the mind of the preservice art education student, is not a way to promote change. Similarly, Lather (1987) argues, a reification and recipes approach to knowledge serves only to further disempower and disenfranchise already vulnerable art education students.

Furthermore, it is impossible to conceive of a pedagogical theory that addresses all situations and operates in isolation from context (Nadesan and Elenes 1998). It is acknowledged that in order for pedagogical practices to be successful, they must be adapted to their particular social, historical, cultural and economic contexts (Nadesan and Elenes 1998). It is assumed that any programs resulting from the visions articulated in this thesis need to be designed to meet varying teaching contexts (Courtney 1997). It is unlikely that any suggestions resulting from this research can produce high quality teachers for all contexts.

Similarly, it was assumed that this research operates in a two-way relationship with the reader and hence interpretation remains open to the multiple constructions held by various

audiences (Lincoln 1986). It is within these overall assumptions and limitations that this study was framed.

4.7   Describing the paradigm

This research operates in an aesthetic or artistic paradigm. Eisner (1998: 6) describes the arts paradigm as being "qualitative intelligence in action.". While the artistic or aesthetic paradigm for research has some characteristics in common with other forms of qualitative inquiry, there are also significant differences. Aesthetic inquiry is still a relatively new form of inquiry as applied to educational research and as such its characteristics are evolving as acceptance for this form of research grows. Lincoln and Guba (1982: 7) describe the evolution of the process:

> As each discipline develops into maturity, it continually experiments and modifies its procedures and attitude until it finally devises a method appropriate to its activities. The method of inquiry thus becomes as much an integral part of the discipline as does the subject matter itself.

While agreeing with this comment as it relates to an emergent aesthetic paradigm for educational research, I feel that the nature of artistic inquiry is such that there will never be a finally devised method, but rather the aesthetic inquiry paradigm will be characterised by fluidity, challenge to authority, innovation and change. Despite the difficulty of defining the aesthetic paradigm for research, there is a need to transparently present the precepts that characterise this research. These precepts reflect my beliefs about art, art education, the practice of research and the world I live in. The artistic paradigm used in this research encompassed a constellation of beliefs, which, while acknowledging the diversity of views held, are generally ideas of consensus within the arts community. There are basic assumptions, such as creativity, imagination and expressiveness, held within an artistic paradigm. These postures 'frame' the research, making the researcher selectively view particular parts of a much greater vista. Carroll (1997: 171) defines an aesthetic paradigm as being the "body of beliefs which govern a community of practitioners." This research aimed to establish aesthetic research as a paradigm for educational inquiry, and to shift research towards more creative, artistic forms of knowing. The importance of establishing a paradigm clearly at the commencement of the research is highlighted by Guba and Lincoln (1994: 107) as paradigm selections "represent a worldview that defines for its holder the nature of the "world", the individual's place in it, and the range of possible

relationships to that world and its parts." Paradigms are defined by certain fundamental axioms. Guba (1982: 236) states:

> Axioms can be defined as the set of undemonstrated (and undemonstrable) propositions accepted by convention (even if only intuitively) or established by practice as the basic building blocks of some conceptual or theoretical structure or system.

The axioms for this research were the arbitrary sets of assumptions about the method used that I consciously and tacitly brought into the research process. The axioms of this inquiry included the view that there are a multiplicity of ways of knowing; that much knowledge is intangible; that research is holistic and divergent; that there is a strong relationship between the inquirer and the participants and eventually the reader; that research is ideographic and value-bound; and that the research focuses on difference and detail as much as similarities and generalisations. These axioms defined the aesthetic paradigm as it was applied in this research investigation.

4.8   Qualitative inquiry

While this research was conceived in an aesthetic research paradigm, this paradigm is within the broader field of qualitative inquiry. Artistic understanding is inherently a search for qualities. Eisner (1998: 21) states: "It is through qualitative inquiry, the intelligent apprehension of the qualitative world, that we make sense". Qualitative research, as with artistic practice, is designed to "illuminate" (Eisner 1997: 262). Denzin (1994) argues that qualitative research is inherently artistic, creative and interpretive. Finlay (1995: 124) summarises the artistic nature of the qualitative paradigm in the following statement:

> In qualitative research, the researcher is the artisan, building up, layer upon layer, detailed knowledge about the individuals and communities studied, seeking the kind of empirical connection that allows the researcher to interpret meaning in the subtle word, phrase, or gesture of those around her… the research artisan depends on "deep knowledge" of materials, builds skills through corporeal knowledge and defines herself and her place in the community through the work she does.

Similarly, Janesick (1994: 218) draws an analogy between artistic practice and the nature of qualitative research:

> Just as dance mirrors and adapts to life, qualitative design is adapted, changed and redesigned as the study proceeds, because of the social realities of doing research among and with the living… The qualitative researcher is like the choreographer who creates a dance to make a statement. For the researcher the story told is the dance in all its complexity, context, originality and passion.

I believe that no single method has privilege over another in terms of accessing knowledge and understandings. Furthermore, research is an emotional and passionate undertaking and those affective aspects enhance rather than detract from the gaining of understandings. This research aimed at forming meaning within the context of social situations. The conversations of the accomplished teachers were multi-vocal and complex and so narrative has been used as a way to gather data and report findings. Within this narrative, I presented dialogue and rich description in such a way as it allowed for vicarious experience of the context in which understandings could be formulated. This assumes that the people participating in research were not soulless 'subjects' but rather people who were equal and thoughtful collaborators in the research process. The accomplished teachers and I were socialised participants in the research process and we tacitly presented certain values. The personal stories, histories, gender, age, social class, ethnicity and the people of influence around the researcher and participants shaped the research and subsequently choice of methodology was intrinsically linked to an operational paradigm and influences all findings of the research process.

4.9   Criticism as a form of inquiry

Methods of art criticism were applied to this research (Eisner 1991; Eisner 1998). Art criticism, as a research methodology, is concerned with finding meaning. Meaning is a highly complex and elusive goal, as it was embedded in the beliefs and practices of the accomplished art teachers consulted within this study. This study was concerned with making patterns and searching for significance within the plethora of information collected. Criticism as a research approach, aimed at locating essential qualities. It was a search for the consistent and enduring, yet at the same time, this research was sensitive to the idiosyncratic and the fleeting, as these spontaneous reactions can also be very significant. Guba and Lincoln (1981: 109) describe this process as, "apparently idiosyncratic observation that nevertheless carries great insight and meaning." Disagreement within the study was not seen as a vice, but rather as strength, allowing for counterviews to be recognised. Criticism in the context of this study was about discernment, not merely description. Flinders and Eisner (1994: 342) state that "the function of criticism is the education of perception of works of art; it is an auxiliary in the process, a difficult process, of learning to see and hear."

The method of criticism applied in this study was not based on any fixed or linear model of practice, but rather on the view that critical approaches develop in response to the context of the study. Eisner and Flinders (1994: 387) describe the evolutionary and responsive nature of critique:

> This will mean, in the context of education, that as schools change and as teaching practices take on forms they previously did not possess, educational critics will need to employ tools and methods of disclosure that are sensitive to the subtleties and complexities of these new forms of criticism. In this sense criticism is itself an art.

Criticism has a long tradition in the arts, but has only been systematically used relatively recently as an educational research method (Eisner 1986). Criticism is an eclectic practice in the art world and critics represent a diversity of backgrounds and practices, and are largely self-taught. Lippard (1999) notes that there are different ways of seeing and thinking about things within the realm of criticism.

Criticism implies a public act of disclosure, relating ideas and perceptions into themes and judgements. Educational criticism provides insights and understandings and is concerned with perceiving phenomena and revealing fresh visions or understandings of qualities. As a proactive form of inquiry, criticism should contribute to the enhancement of the educational process. Educational criticism is accommodated under the qualitative paradigm as described by Finlay and Knowles (1995: 135):

> The work of a researcher is analogous with that of an art critic. As soon as you start to make meaning from someone's life, to interpret their words or actions and write your views on their experience, however sympathetically, then you become a critic.

Criticism as used in this research investigation was defined as, "a direct personal encounter with specific work of art resulting in linguistic analysis and interpretation of the work" (Anderson 1991: 18). The 'work of art' of this thesis is an accumulated quilting of the attitudes, practices and conversations of a group of accomplished art teachers.

Appreciation implies illumination rather than accepting what is seen. Both vices and virtues can be appreciated, as a way of discerning the character and qualities of accomplished art teaching in New South Wales' primary schools. The intention of the criticism methodology in this investigation was to highlight perceptions of those features of

art education practice that are exemplars of quality. It was about enhanced understanding and insight into meaning. Flinders and Eisner (1994: 348) state, "critics not only <u>sense</u> the world, they <u>make sense</u> of it." In adopting the role of critic, my aim was to gain greater insight into the qualities that constitute accomplished practice in primary art teaching and be able to render these qualities through written discourse in a form that helps people to understand what constitutes accomplishment and how these notions can be integrated into preservice art teacher education.

The conceptual foundations of criticism when applied to an educational context, "rest on two basic analogies: the researcher as critic and teaching as art" (Flinders and Eisner 1994). By positioning myself in the study as critic, and the teachers as artists, it is important to delineate how the role of the critic is replayed through this research. Murdick (1992: 58) defines a critic as being, "one who, as a member of a certain discourse community, can discuss works of art in a certain way using a familiar set of facts, but also a particular vocabulary and rhetoric that are both specialised and shared." This definition implies that the art critic holds a high level of 'inside knowledge' and an ability to be able to relate to shared meanings. This is equally true of educational critics who need to "know something about the subject being taught and about the ways in which it might be taught" (Eisner 1998: 244). Eisner (1995: 105) further contends that the educational critic is concerned with making:

> Judgements and conveying those judgements to others through speech or text. The aim of criticism is to expand our awareness of what we might not have noticed. For teachers to become aware of how they are functioning, they need the assistance of those who are able to see and share with them what they are going to see.

Through experience and familiarity with the field, the critic is able to discern significant aspects of the phenomenon and communicate these in a way that displays such aspects for informed scrutiny. As I have been a primary art teacher for several years, and also worked extensively in preservice art teacher education and primary art curriculum development, I assumed the role of a critic, possessing some degree of expertise in the field. However, throughout this research the mantle of 'expertise' was called into question, particularly the way in which it disempowers people. Instead, I focused on more inclusive notions of critic stemming from feminist critique and contemporary art practice. Contemporary art critics are more likely to reject positions of authority, governed by prescribed political lens, in

favour of a preferred stance based on direct experience of an artwork and discussions with the artist and audience. In this approach, the teachers conveyed personal, empathetic involvement and were encouraged to talk about themselves and their inferences in relation to their life and teaching experiences (Geahigan 1999). Criticism was viewed as a collaborative act where teachers question as well as respond. Criticism is still inherently a judgemental and persuasive act, but this judgement was undertaken from the viewpoint of exploration and collaborative values. Anderson (1993: 202) notes: "Value judgements underlie all criticism, thus criticism is an act of persuasion." The model adopted for this research was aligned to the notion of 'exploratory criticism' as described by Anderson (1993) where I, as critic, made initial evaluations, cautiously and tentatively. These ideas were filtered back to the critical friends group for comment and exploration. Throughout this process, I continually revised and modified my initial descriptions and interpretations. Even the final text can be considered open, as foreclosure eliminates the possibility of valuable contributions made by readers of this research.

Peterson and Swain (1978: 295) argue that critical appreciation involves the combination of value judgement and intellectual "maturity". The work of the critic is also clearly empirical, since it addresses the qualities of the empirical world (Eisner 1998). Participant observation, conversation, interviews, visual records were used to gather information to allow me to describe accomplished art teaching practices in terms of its inherent structure. Description opened the path to discerning criteria of worth inherent to the practices. Judging the worth, was not done solely by the critic, but rather by working with the teachers, recognising the subtleties and interplays inherent within my own and the critical friends group's percepts, affective responses and socio-cultural contexts.

Eisner (1986) uses the term "connoisseur" to describe an educational critic. Flinders and Eisner (1994: 347) write of educational connoisseurship as a form of sensory perception through which active conceptions are formulated:

> This type of informed perception is sometimes referred to in the arts as connoisseurship; the term connoisseur is derived from the Latin root cognoscere, meaning to know or to understand. An art connoisseur is someone who knows about art, someone who understands what to look for in the way of qualities possessed by works within that particular form of expression. An educational connoisseur is likewise someone who knows what to look for, someone who is able to read the qualities of an educational performance. Connoisseurship is the art of

appreciation, the ability to differentiate and discern complexities, nuances and subtleties in aspects of the world around us.

The connoisseur, by virtue of her background, is assumed to have enhanced perception and be able to pay attention to nuances and details, including the sensory features of a phenomenon. Eisner (1998: 22) argues that "we need to achieve a critic's level of educational connoisseurship to recognise what counts, and we need to create a form of educational criticism to make what we see clear to those who have a stake in our schools." I feel uneasy with the term 'connoisseur' to describe people engaged in aesthetic appreciation of an educational context. Postmodernist critique does not place an authority at a higher level of status than the originator of the work, the artist. Similarly, the educational critic should not consider herself to be of a higher order of expertise than the teachers with whom the critique is shared. Critiques can be based on an appreciative, rather than judgmental paradigm. An appreciative paradigm focuses on judgements made according to individual constructions of understanding rather than notions of an expert "truth" that comes by virtue of power, position or experience.

The term 'critical appreciation' (Anderson 1990: 137) suits the research approach adopted in this study. He defines critical appreciation as the "ability to describe, analyse and evaluate experiences and phenomena, based on publicly defendable criteria that are related to inherent characteristics in the event or phenomena". Critical appreciation recognises that judgement and decision making involve the interplay of affective and intellectual qualities, and the reorganisation of one's own values as an artist and a critic, audience and performer. Eisner (1998: 68-69) stresses the distinction between adopting an appreciative framework and 'liking' something when he writes:

> Appreciation is a term that unfortunately is conflated with "a liking for". There is no necessary relationship between appreciating something and liking it. To appreciate… means to experience the qualities that constitute each and understand something about them.

Appreciation was therefore used as a research methodology to reveal significant values in accomplished art teaching and to provide a structure for making choices about the relative significance of those values in relations to preservice art teacher education.

Critical appreciation as the method for this research involved:

a) perceptual analysis of the discourse and actions of the art teachers;

b) historical and cultural inquiry into the context for art teaching in New South Wales primary schools;

c) affective responses to all aspects of the study; and

d) interpretive responses through the text contained in this thesis.

Perceptual analysis involved sensitive interaction with teachers and their work. I encouraged the teachers to speak of their intentions and the content and processes of their art lessons. The teachers reflected upon the relationship between content and process and contemplate the nature and meaning of their work. I looked for examples of originality of ideas and practices. The teachers spoke together about teaching, their backgrounds and shared examples relating to technical execution of teaching episodes.

Historical and cultural inquiry into the context of the teachers' work was conducted to determine significance within the framework of broader socio- cultural importance and existing research literature. This process informed evaluative synthesis and enabled the works to be appreciated in relation to other teaching and historical influences on art education.

Affective responses were an integral part of the appreciative critique. Explicit within the critique were the values and perspectives held by the critical friends group of teachers and me. Affective responses were projected into all parts of the study and encapsulated the holistic and largely intuitive aspects of the appreciative process.

Interpretation was based on the thematic organisation of the elements considered of most significance to the researcher and the participating accomplished teachers. These themes evolved from detailed description, interpreted in relation to personal feelings of the research participants. The process of forming themes involved creative and imaginative layering of ideas to create a detailed picture of the results of this study.

4.10 Stages of criticism

Criticism is not a linear and ordered process, but rather a "creative activity that deals with the mysteries of an artefact… an artefact that represents some type of accumulated life

experience (Anderson 1991: 22). The model of appreciative criticism used in this study comes from Anderson (1995: 203). While in no prescribed order, Anderson suggests that the stages of appreciation include:

- Reaction,
- Perceptual analysis,
- Personal interpretation,
- Contextual examination, and
- Synthesis.

The <u>reaction phase</u> included the establishment of a dialogue with the informants and the teachers that formed the critical friends group. Concurrently, there was the exploration of ideas, including an orientation to primary art education through historical and cultural readings, and a general grounding in the pragmatic nature of primary art teaching. This reading and background inquiry allowed for the development of a close acquaintance with the phenomenon to be studied. Through this orientation it was then possible to define the problem and select appropriate modes of inquiry.

The <u>perceptual analysis phase</u> was reliant upon first-hand acquaintances with the accomplished art teachers and their practices. Discussions in the critical friends sessions and subsequent school visits and conversations included formal and informal approaches that encouraged sharing of experiences and reflecting upon their values. Perception was viewed as a highly sensual and affective process and intuition was used along with conversations and observations. Perception was an active process involving all the senses in an attempt to 'see' (in more than a visual sense) and to seek understanding. During this phase, description was framed within the context of the teachers' and researcher's small world and the larger historical and cultural context of art education philosophies and practices. The descriptive text was rich and included examples, vignettes and generalisations in an attempt to present a coherent quilt of the teaching practices observed. The teachers' ideas were described in such a way that "the reader who has not seen the work will be able to understand the interpretation and evaluations which the critic will make" (Sherman and Lincoln 1982: 12). As Eisner (1998: 89) indicates description should, "enable us to know what it would feel like and look like if we were there". Good description allows the reader to visualise what a place or process is like and to experience

that vision in the mind's eye. The descriptions in this study focused on both the words of the teachers and the feelings they expressed through their conversations.

The personal interpretation phase was conducted through themes, that were likened to the patterned blocks that are stitched together to form quilts. Themes enabled links to be made between individual ideas and the total picture presented. Themes also allowed small narratives to be presented alongside more broad, general ideas. Interpretation was based on detailed and colourful descriptions, which selectively described salient external and internal aspects of the accomplished teachers' work. Flinders (1994) argues that themes assist in the recognition and naming of patterns. The patterns of interpretation presented are inherently selective. Through interpretation, the practices observed were illuminated and conversations initiated. The interpretation explored antecedent influences and was contained within the stated context. The aim of the interpretation was to re-present in an expressive form, the significant moments of the study. The interpretation used expressive and descriptive modes of narrative to present in vivid renderings the experiences of this study in a form that can be shared and discussed by other art educators. Interpretation was a form of presentation, using language to capture feelings, symbols and images from the study. Interpretation included aspects of intertextuality, through the connection of the teaching observed to the socio-and cultural texts which influenced its nature (Walker 1996). Similarly, opposition was equally likely to be included in interpretation as agreement, as opposition highlight polarities and served to further challenge authoritative interpretations (Walker 1996).

Contextual examination occurred at all points of the appreciative process. This context included the teachers' socio-cultural environment, the larger environment of primary education, the art education context, the context of teacher education in Australia and the context of the research environment framed by the approach and purposes of this study. The context acted as the backing to the quilted ideas, providing links to the past and adding to the strength and durability of the quilt

The synthesis phase was a judgemental process of selection, aimed at determining which aspects described and interpreted were significant and offered imaginings of a future teacher education for generalist primary teachers. The synthesis phase was evaluative and

aimed at some resolution of issues identified at the commencement and throughout the critical appreciation process. The synthesis apparent in critical appreciation represented higher order thinking and the extension of ideas beyond the actual, to include imaginings of possible futures.

4.11 The role of the researcher

The researcher was a major instrument within the research. Finlay and Knowles (1995: 138) note:

> We are beginning to place our feelings squarely in the research process. The research story. The researcher has a life and influence that is complex, interconnected with all that goes on within the researching process. Researching is not something you do in a vacuum and it is not something that is devoid of a whole lot of messy, intricate, personal constraints.

The foregrounding of self was significant to this inquiry. The way the narrative was constructed and interpreted is a representation of myself as researcher. I have to be aware of this and reflect on my internal conversations and how these shaped the presentation of the teachers' discourse.

The methods selection also reflected the personality of the researcher, as Eisner describes it, researchers tend to find their "place in the sun" (1997: 261). Yet, in an appreciative research methodology, the researcher remains typically a little outside the setting. The appreciative methodology used for this study was not about presenting a self-portrait. Rather it used my experiences and sensibility to underscore the qualities of the practice apparent in the accomplished teachers' conversations and determining how these can inform preservice art education. To do this effectively, the teachers' conversations were approached from a critical standpoint, while at the same time maintaining a level of intimacy that allowed a detailed understanding of the qualities of their work. The result of this was the presentation of an appreciative critique of the accomplished teachers' conversations and the formulation of themes pertinent to preservice art education. Interestingly, while attempting to maintain my role in the research as critic and teacher educator, I found that my time as a primary teacher and my work as an artist were contained within all aspects of the study. I therefore felt no need to foreground these directly in the writing up of this thesis. I felt a sense of immediacy and exploratory involvement in the study and approached this study in an idiosyncratic way that reflected

my personality as a teacher, an artist and a tertiary educator. This gave me empathetic engagement with the teachers and the ability to be sensitive to the actualities of teacher education. I am aware of the manner in which emotion played a role, both consciously and unconsciously in all aspects of the research. As a woman who trained as both an artist and a teacher within the system I am investigating I was aware of unavoidable social and cultural issues that impact upon the research endeavour. All these factors operated in a dynamic way to shape the research process and product.

It should be noted that as this research adopted a notion of democratic criticism, I was consciously aware of the need to 'step back' and to allow the voices of the teachers to be heard in equal balance to my voice. Criticism is about hearing the silences and making sure that my recording of these adequately represented the views of the stakeholders. A democratic approach to research involved eliciting the teachers' voices and a willingness to hear those voices and honour the voices in interpretation and reporting. The teachers were empowered to develop self-reflexive attitudes to their conversations.

What counts as knowledge within any conception of research is grounded in the experiences of the researcher. My experiences offer different ways of seeing and feeling. I believe that this study was about telling a story rather than about prediction and control. Collins (1997) contends that feminist research is characterised by a fusion of the personal and the professional and the making of connections between the lived experience and academic theory. This study stressed the need to present stories that connect the pragmatic with the theoretical. The practical understanding of the accomplished teachers complement the philosophical and historical context of the study to produce imaginings for future preservice art education. This research was framed around values of collaboration, intuition and connection. By having the teachers and myself working collaboratively, the effect for us all is what Collins (1997: 197) describes as "life enhancing, productive and energising". This ensured that an imagined future for teacher education was infused with a level of passion and energy.

Knowledge can be pursued in a number of ways and meaning was constructed through relationships among individuals, social structures and cultural artefacts. Contradiction is an important site for the formulation dynamic understandings. As Hagaman (Hagaman 1990:

32) insists: "Feminist philosophers have rejected the ideal of objective, universal knowledge in favour of the notion that meaning is understood and Knowledge is constructed in the relationships between an individual or individuals and the issue being discussed." In this way, the group of accomplished teachers, predominantly women, who comprised the critical friends group served as powerful co-critics in the making of meaning. The accomplished teachers held dual roles of artists, involved in the art of quality teaching, and critics, reflecting on their practices and developing patterns and themes of meaning. Similarly, while I was positioned as the critic in this study, I was not a separate authority as I was also a primary teacher, capable of sharing the artists' insights with the critical friends group. I am also an art maker and teacher educator, so I was positioned within a number of relationships, which served to inform the construction of meaning.

4.12 Postmodernist influences

The research methodology adopted for this study was based on the postmodernist doubt that "any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, had a universal and general claim as the 'right' or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge" (Richardson 1994: 517). Postmodernist research acknowledges the impossibility of a historical, transcendental or self-authenticating version of truth Kincheloe and Mc Laren (in Denzin and Lincoln 1998). The characteristics of postmodernist research apparent in the construction of this research included; the embracing of the experiential; an action-orientated view of research; a lessening of researcher control; the importance of discourse, the centring of critical reflection in the research process; and a movement away from beliefs that research should be about disengagement and objectivity.

The postmodernist critique as applied in this study was concerned with plurality and non-linearity. Richardson (1990: 11) notes that a "postmodernist stance challenges claims to a singular, correct style for doing and presenting research and rejects Enlightenment's faith in progress through education and rationality." Postmodernist critique as the methodology applied to this study relied on the opinions of both the teachers and myself. It encouraged the accomplished teachers to collaborate in the research process and shape the nature of future art education practices. As with postmodernist art, some of the tools of presentation and interpretation include pastiche, montage, bricollage and the juxtapositioning of themes

to characterise the nature of accomplished teaching practices in primary art education. These ideas were presented in the analogous form of a quilt, comprised of several layers.

4.13 Layered conversations

This research relied upon the establishment of critical conversations among the accomplished teachers and myself. The teachers' conversations were highly personal, reflective and built around their sharing of life and teaching stories. The teachers recalled significant moments in the critical friends meetings and these become the anchoring points in the combined history and narratives. Through their stories, the accomplished teachers interwove tacit subject and propositional objective knowledge (Lather 1991) into a mutually informing total picture that was simultaneously one person's story and a collective larger story that resonates with patterns for future art education practices.

These conversations were recorded and interpreted in a non-linear and non-hierarchal way. Keifer- Boyd (1997) writes of the need for a multi-vocal approach where the critic uses a range of ways to encourage access and response to artworks. Similarly, in accessing the responses of the teachers, this study used formal conversations and unstructured meetings, in both individual and group contexts. Similarly, interpretation of the conversations relied on the contemplation of multiple points of view, and multiple potential meanings (Anderson 1995). The critique became an interactive process with the teachers and this allowed for a multiplicity of possible insights and meanings to emerge. Langer (1957: 38) indicates that, "since living beings are indescribably complex, the tensions that compose the vital process are not simply successive, but have multiple, often incomprehensible relations." These tensions were actively encouraged in the study as they fostered critical dialogue among the accomplished teachers and myself. The teachers reported changes in their ideas resulting from the reflection that occurred following discussions in both the critical friends and classroom settings. In this way, ideas were constantly layered and reviewed.

Part of the function of the critical friends group within this research was to reveal issues of imposition and to understand what occurred in the minds of the teachers and in their actions in the classroom (Lather 1987). Underlying the views held by teachers were a number of issues that may have directly impacted on their practices and theorising in art education.

By valuing these personal issues and reflections, the research aimed to be liberating and empowering for the accomplished teachers involved, myself, and art education practices.

The critical friends group represented a diversity of teachers considered to be accomplished.   This thesis was premised on the view that excellence in teaching can inform future practice and deserves greater visibility within research investigations (Eisner 1998: 215). The respect for accomplishment in this study should not to be confused with the idea of a single, nominated thing that could be called 'accomplished'. Rather, the axiom of accomplishment applied in this study was a pluralistic view, which contended that excellence can exist in many forms and a range of manifestations. Eisner (1998: 78) states, "If we take a leaf from the arts and apply what we can learn from them to the study of teachers, we would expect excellence in teaching, as in art, to be of many kinds." Anderson (Anderson 1999: 9) in his study of American art teachers stresses the importance of listening to the narratives of good art teachers, who he feels are at the "heart of good art programs everywhere." Similarly, Sullivan (1993: 16) argues the need to go beyond the standard views of academic experts in the discipline to examine practices used by the multiplicity of experts in the field, incorporating a much wider view of the notion of professional practice. He cautions that, "art education needs no overt conceptual straight-jacketing" and that notions of what constitutes excellent practice in art education need to be widened rather than defined and limited.

Eisner (1991: 11) acknowledges that all programs, no matter how well conceived must always be mediated if they are to, "influence the lives of those with whom we work. This process of mediation, at its best, is an artistic activity. We call it teaching." Like all art, the art of teaching is a highly idiosyncratic activity. It is impossible to match all styles of art to one criteria of excellence or quality and similarly in the art of teaching it is impossible to match the actuality of any given example of accomplished teaching practice to a set ideal. Rather, teaching practice is acknowledged as particular and idiosyncratic and hence any theorising resultant from the study of quality teaching "must be treated with flexibility: it must be shaped to fit practice" (Eisner 1998: 97).

The focus of this study was on opening the classroom doors and describing and appreciating accomplished teaching practice in order to bring the values, knowledge and

expertise of the teachers into the public domain in a way that is sensitive to the contextual influences. In a broad sense, this can be described as presenting what it means to be an accomplished primary art teacher, in the context of a classroom environment that is not predictable, controllable or systematic.

4.14 Value and methodology

All methods contain embedded assumptions and values that speak to the ideological paradigm in which they are framed. All decision making involves value judgements. Value in research recognises the personal stance the researcher brings as perceiver and the decision-maker in the study. I was aware of the affective and intellectual biases that I brought to this investigation. My proficiencies are in the area of art and conversation and my deficiencies are perhaps in separating my personal rationales from the interpretation of the significance of the activities, discourse and phenomena encountered in the study. My biases and beliefs are inherent to all that I conceive and achieve through this study. As Dewey (1934) notes in relation to art, and Eisner (1998: 85) sees as being equally applicable to aesthetic inquiry in education:

> Every critic, like every artist, has a bias, a predilection that is bound up with the very existence of individuality. It is his task to convert it into an organ of sensitive perception and of intelligent insight, and to do so without surrendering the instinctive preferences from which are derived direction and sincerity.

The method adopted allowed for maximum flexibility and insight and tacit understandings and feelings were encouraged. Differences of opinion, either between the teachers or between the teachers and myself were celebrated as Mouffe (in Nadesan and Elenes 1998: 265) describes "without alterity and otherness no identity could ever assert itself". These differing views were expressed within a framework that assessed persuasiveness largely on the basis of the artists' (the teachers') and the critic's (the researcher's) sensibilities and perceptions. This process allowed corroboration to occur and results in the formation of themes that enabled a holistic representation to be interpreted.

This study was a passionate and personal undertaking. I felt a strong sense of belonging with the critical friends group and the research as a whole. Despite the time taken away from family and friends and the lack of sleep and rest, I was compelled by this study and thoroughly enjoy every moment of its birth and growth. Having this level of connection

with research was very important. Collin and Chandler 1993 note (in Finlay and Knowles 1995: 133):

> Before qualitative research can truly become art, the researcher and the research
> must be linked together. When this occurs, research is no longer a tool to pay the
> bills, but is part of the lived reality of the researcher.

4.15 Ratification of critique

An important aspect of this research was the way in which criticism can be used to inform future practices in preservice art education. This research aimed to study and document "what is" and "what maybe", but also to explore what Schofield (1990: 217) describes as possible visions of "what could be".   Through the integration of research, critical reflection and action, it was intended that the study enabled imaginings of alternative futures in art instruction. These possibilities were envisaged as 'small theories'. Smith (1995: 10) states, "the creation of significant new artworks changes our perception of existing works and our understanding of the relationships among them." It was envisaged that this changed understanding might provide ideas for a predicted future. However, within this goal, it needs to be acknowledged that ultimately, it is a teacher's critical judgements, children's responses and the context that determine the quality of classroom learning. I have deliberately not developed a model as the result of this study. Lincoln (1986: 139) cautions against models of educational practice:

> It is absolutely necessary that we abandon prescriptive models, which derived from
> bureaucratic forms and move to descriptions which free our minds to see what is
> there, not what we think ought to be there, and which allow us to derive, or ground,
> new theory.

I focused on description and appreciation of practice as an aid to the imagination of a future, which it is hoped might change conceptions and initiate conversations about practice in tertiary teacher education. This imaginative framework provides scope for future dialogue and research, rather than giving clear-cut directives. This approach is supported by the writings of Wilson (1997: 2) who comments:

> Too frequently we think, naively, that research will tell us what we art educators
> ought to do with the students in our classroom: Unhappily for those who wish for
> clear-cut directives, research yields no easy solutions to the pedagogical problems
> that beset us. Nevertheless, good research can help us to think clearly about goals
> and purposes.

4.16 Conclusion

In conclusion, just as every painting is an evolution of the artist's will upon some medium, every piece of research undertaken under an aesthetic criticism model is a product of the idiosyncratic actions of the researcher within the planned methodology. Eisner (1998: 34) contends, the sensibilities of the researcher, "provide the means through which we make sense of a complex qualitative array. Sensibility alerts us to nuanced qualities and the schema relevant to a domain, the significance of what to seek and see". The ways the researcher sees and feels in the investigation are unique to the individual. This process takes vision. This vision operates at two levels. On one level the critic has to attune to phenomenon presented in the study. With this 'eye' the critic records what she sees, hears and feels. On the other level, the critic needs to turn the other eye on herself reflecting on herself and others as enacted within the feelings and doings of the research context. It is the acuteness of these eyes, which govern the value of the critique. This broader notion of seeing is reflected in the words of Jung (1964: 60) who writes:

> I have always been impressed by the fact that there are a surprising number of individuals who never use their minds if they can avoid it, and an equal number who do use their minds, but in an amazingly stupid way. I was surprised to find many intelligent and wide awake people who lived (as far as we can make out) as if they never learned to use their sense organs: They did not see things before their eyes, hear the words sounding in their ears, or notice the things they touched or tasted. Some lived without being aware of the state of their own bodies.

While methodology is closely linked to these broader notions of perception, it is the interpretation of the gathered data that enables the perception of the critic to be accessible to a wider audience. The following chapter addresses the way interpretations are made within aesthetic educational criticism.

5   Interpretation and form

In quilting the rules are often uncertain and contradictory.
(Hinson 1966: 53)

5.1   Introduction

Aesthetic research methodology intimates participation in artistic traditions that value the sensitivity and intuition of the creative mind. Kant (in Cassirer 1974: 145) distinguishes between what he terms "aesthetic universality" and "objective reality". The difference between these terms is that objective reality involves the truthful depiction of an object or phenomenon, whereas aesthetic universality concerns the communicability of contemplations of the object, rather than the object itself. Aesthetic appreciation involves enlarging understanding, through guiding the reader or audience to higher levels of contemplation. Given this distinction, there is a need to develop a way of determining efficacy that matches the inherent nature of this inquiry.

Lincoln (1988) argues that each tradition of research requires separate and distinct criteria to be brought to bear in judging its trustworthiness or goodness. Jacob (1989: 229) defines paradigm as being the "entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community." The paradigm represents a diversity of assumptions held by the researcher about human understanding, theory, legitimate questions and answers, appropriate methodology and ultimately the way in which a reader is able to accept the research as being cogent and capable of supporting the intended ideas.

In this study, the term 'validity' is not seen as an appropriate term to apply to aesthetic appreciation as a research method. Accordingly, Eisner (1991: 15) reflects that "the meanings that are engendered through choreography, through music, and through the visual arts are unique or special to their forms." It is therefore desirable that notions of trustworthiness are derived from the paradigm and represent communal acceptance of the unique nature of the critical spirit contained within aesthetic appreciation.

Criteria for judging the efficacy of art-based inquiries are emerging. Aesthetic appreciation is still developing a body of critique that is well-grounded in a community of researchers and one of the challenges for aesthetic appreciation as a form of educational research is to engage with issues of significance and develop criteria for determining trustworthiness and quality.

This research attempts to present an alternative to validity for determining the quality, efficacy and force of a piece of research conceived under an aesthetic paradigm.

5.2 The origins of validity

The traditional definition of validity is expressed as the question, "Are we measuring what we think we are measuring?" (Kvale 1992: 22). Lincoln and Guba (1988: 3) establish four terms, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, to equate to validity in naturalistic paradigms. But validity in an art-based inquiry is not a matter of fulfilling a set of criteria – but rather traits that characterise the essence of what is trying to be achieved.

Validity can be thought of as the degree of 'rightness' of a particular research. This notion implies that there is a right answer, or a defined point which the research aims to attain. This is a problematic notion in art-based research because if there is no defined summit, how does the researcher know when she is getting close to reaching it! Postmodern research argues that there is no single right answer or truth. Similarly, such research also questions whether valid research most closely represents reality. Reality is socially and personally constructed and within any situation multiple realities can exist. If validity is defined as"the congruence between some representation of an object, context, situation, event, or person and the object that is "signified" by that representation" (Lincoln 1997: 161) the question is raised as to which representation (of the multiples possible) is the 'truest' and on what basis are certain aspects 'signified'? Omission becomes as significant in determining what is 'read' of a perceived reality as does inclusion.

Perhaps a more appropriate way to gauge efficacy and honesty as applied to art research is the "verisimilitude or isomorphism, the extent to which some signifiers' referent can be recognised in a physical or social world" (Lincoln 1997: 161). A further definition of validity applied to this research is Lather's (1991) notion of "catalytic validity". Part of the

purpose of this study is an imagined future of art teacher education, and the empowerment of teachers to have a voice in this agenda. Therefore, to be valid, this research needs to "move those it studies to understand the world and the way it is shaped in order for them to transform it" (Denzin and Lincoln 1998: 289). To have catalytic validity the study relies upon engaging conversations and the presentation through thick description of the resultant themes and imaginings. Within this purpose, continual checks were made with the teachers, myself and the research community to ensure what was presented was credible and plausible. Consistency and neutrality may be in opposition to this purpose, and so the acknowledgment of different voices and the questioning of truths were foregrounded in the search for greater applicability to purpose.

As children we are taught to value art that 'corresponds' closely with truth. Yet the one truth that does exist, is that in art there is no truth! Even hyperrealist paintings carry a deeper reality than the individual depiction of the accuracy of a strand of straw in a haystack! Reality is a product of sensory induction, personal conceptions, intuition, and imagined ideas. As Guba and Lincoln (1989: 8) identify, "constructions are inextricably linked to the particular physical, psychological, social, and cultural contexts within which they are formed and to which they refer." There are numerous ways the realities apparent in this thesis could have been configured. There is no final authority because the presence of the researcher in art-based inquiry is vital, but this mere presence distorts any reality that exists. I instead looked for, "partial, temporal, historical resolutions" (Richardson 1990: 63).

5.3   Delimitations

Critical writing is inherently affect-laden, so its plausibility is reliant upon the readers' interaction with the piece and the vicarious way they are able to assimilate aspects of the writing, as if seeing through the critic's eyes. This research, in adopting a critical appreciative approach to an educational question, assumes that there is a continual and mutual interaction between the participants in the research and the readers of this research. It is anticipated that this research activates consciousness through the presentation of patterns of circumstances and ideas that characterise accomplished primary art teaching and generalist teacher education. This heightened level of consciousness may serve to stir

imaginings in a more universal sense and enhance the conversations surrounding art education.

Beauty, judgement, truth and quality are seen as highly problematic terms in art that require interrogation. The artistry and quality of the research is determined through sensitive perception, continual self and participant reflexivity, questioning and critiquing interpretations and interrogating 'self' within the study. Kvale (1994:) argues that trustworthiness of research is constructed through dialogue and negotiation. The dialogue in this research is persuasive and aesthetic. Ideally, the presentation of the accomplished teachers' conversations was characterised by syntactic and semantic density, combined with a sense of repleteness and exemplification. Kvale (1994: 12) maintains that these features inherently ensure aesthetic quality:

> The solidity of the craftsmanship during the production makes the accountant's quality control of the final product less necessary. Second, to develop **strong products** that are so strong and convincing in their own right, that they so to say carry the validation with them, such as a strong piece of art… Appeals to external certification, or official stamps of approval, then become secondary. Valid research in this sense would be research which makes questions of validity superfluous.

Because critical appreciation is inherently judgemental, it is important that judgements made are explicit and based on defensible and transparent criteria. Similarly, these judgements need to be communicated with sensitivity, passion and accuracy to a broader audience. Effective appreciation must be open to the criticism of others and be self-reflective. The results of critical appreciation are more likely to have impact if the report reflects openness and reflexivity on the part of the researcher and the involvement of a critical community in analysis of the critique and interpretations. The characteristics of quality critical appreciation I have applied to this study include:

a) An awareness and explication of the researcher's underlying epistemological assumptions, biases and prejudices;

b) The gathering of data from a range of sources;

c) A depth and accuracy of perception that goes beyond the obvious;

d) A contextual empathy and an understanding of the conditions surrounding phenomena;

e) A conscious process of defamiliarisation while maintaining interactivity and personal engagement with the participants and their activities;

f) The directing of attention to individuality and idiosyncrasy while at the same time, locating the particular in what is general and universal;

g) The use of holistic data embedded with personal meaning and value;

h) A sensitivity to the meaning-making and sense-making structures of participants and audience;

i) An awareness of the socio-political dimension of critical appreciation;

j) The importance of discussion among stakeholders as a way of sharing constructions and sharpening and strengthening diversity;

k) The evidence of prolonged and persistent engagement and observation;

l) The use of member check and peer critique of the data and its interpretation; and

m) The application of referentially adequate records of discourse and observations, in terms of depth and diversity.

Eisner (1998) argues that quality art-based research is determined by the manner in which the critique is presented and the utility that the report engenders. He writes of educational criticism that it must possess coherence, instrumental utility and consensus. Within a postmodernist critique, coherence could apply to the manner in which the critique reflects a range of data sources and voices and the way the critic links to what is already known. *Coherence* within critique should not be confused with consistency. A postmodernist critic sees diversity and dissenting voices as strength. Instrumental utility implies that within the research, a reader is able to locate "the qualities the critic addresses and the meanings he or she ascribes to them"(Eisner 1998: 114). I would argue that further to this, the reader must be impassioned to create his/her own meanings, and not be limited to the meanings ascribed by the critic. Notions of consensus are quite problematic in this research. On one level, the themes presented try to capture individual stories that can stand alone, but together make powerful lines, shapes and patterns. The critical friends groups promoted collective critique while at the same time may have potentially subverted dissent. While this aspect is raised later in this thesis in the discussion of results, it is important to highlight the contradiction between consensus and voice as a methodological dilemma. Courtney (1997: 43) writes of "relative validity" in criticism, which is most obviously seen when two equally acclaimed critics mutually disagree as to the value of a particular work of art. In differing voices, it is not a case of deciding which voice is valid and which is not, but rather how the differing voices persuade the reader to gain a sense meaning. To this end, there are qualities of the

written presentation of the critique, which enhance its communicative capacity and are likely to expand critique. These include:

a) The use of rich descriptive language that promotes a sense of vicariousness;

b) A sense of wholeness to the report;

c) Clarity and understandability of language;

d) Delineating of underlying physical and socio-political contexts and intentions;

e) Appropriateness of the critique to the purpose for which it was intended;

f) A sense of eradiation and penetration;

g) The elegance of language;

h) A level of contention and dissonance;

i) A coherent argument supported by evidence that presents multiple at a times even contradictory interpretations;

j) The evidence of judgements presented in a persuasive manner;

k) A capability to open up deeper discourses and be illuminative through awareness of referential adequacy;

l) A depth of insight that strikes at the heart of the issues surrounding the phenomena and makes the obscure vivid;

m) A sensitivity in portrayal;

n) A personal and idiosyncratic style, that should bear the signature of the writer;

o) An awareness of one's own voice in the critique;

p) A level of meta-criticism, where there is criticism of the criticism and self-criticism; and

q) A willingness to show flexibility and adjustment in the light of developing ideas.

To summarise, both the process and the product of this research reflected artistic characteristics and these aspects were presented authentically and fairly and in a manner that expands discourse and imaginings of future action.

5.4 Determining quality

Critics influence perceptions and judgements and can have significant consequences (Eisner and Flinders 1994). As a result, it is important that the judgements made have merit and worth value to the contexts in which they are formulated. The educational critic makes judgements about relative value of given tasks and how they have been performed.

Eisner (1994: 388) describes the effective educational critic as someone who "points out what goes on in one setting, explains how the situation works, and makes credible judgements about its educational merits." Judgements of the quality are bound by the context in which the research operates and rely heavily upon the belief systems and value positions of the critic, the participants and ultimately the reader or audience. There is a need to be clear about the values, belief systems and community mores that undergird judgements made.

Value in this study was comprised of both merit and worth. *Merit* is defined as the intrinsic beauty or artistry of the research, while *worth* is defined in a more long term sense in relation to applicability, usefulness, contribution and desirability of the imaginings formulated as a result of this study. Merit remains relatively static and can largely be contained within the process and product of the research. The merit of this study was dependent upon:

a) The artistry of the process and product of this investigation;
b) The beauty of design and the way the research 'works';
c) The recognition and presentation of new and interesting patterns of ideas;
d) An articulation of the limitations and proficiencies inherent to the research;
e) The exploration of social and historical tendencies;
f) The explicitness of researcher position;
g) The support and evidence for claims made;
h) A strong ethical dimension;
i) A balance between divergence and convergence; and
j) The evidence of negotiation and collaboration.

Judgements of merit are bound to characteristics within the research itself. People competent to judge merit may disagree about the indicators of merit, or the extent to which the indicators are fulfilled, but merit remains relatively stable.

Worth, on the other hand is determined by the context of this research. Those people with knowledge of the values and context surrounding the study establish the worth of this piece of research. Teachers, generalist art educators and I as a teacher educator will ascertain the worth of this research in reference to the imaginings it creates, the conversations expanded

and the context in which changes may occur. Worth may be greater when a research is particularly original or has a stronger intellectual thrust. The indicators of worth applied to this research included:

a) A demonstrable value to art education practice,

b) The relevance to teachers and teacher educators,

c) The ability to push conversations and ideas beyond what is already known,

d) The empowerment of the people engaged in the research,

e) The mobilisation of passion and energy to the advancement of art education,

f) The emergence of new ideas and innovations, and

g) The longer term influence of the study on art education and on research practices.

It is generally accepted that worth is historically determined. Good criticism, like good art, is not always presenting a 'pretty' picture. Unpalatable art often gives rise to depths of critical appreciation. Quality appreciation as a research method does not have to be new and beautiful to still be good. In a Japanese aesthetic, the belief is that the ordinary may be very extraordinary. Merit and worth is defined by the patterns of life that honour and respect nature and humility. Good criticism is not about ideas that everything new is better and that the voice of expertise must be heard above all others. It may well be that we already have everything, and we have got it actually present, we need not wait for anything. The worth of the research may already be in the hands and souls of the researcher and the participating accomplished teachers.

5.5 Form as an indicator of value and merit

I wish to argue that notions of "form" provide a way of determining the merit and value of art-based research. *Form* is defined for this research as being the configuration, arrangement and style of the criticism. It exists as an abstract ideal comprised of the entities combined with, but also beyond, the physical form. Put simply, form is the nature of the research. The arts have historically emphasised the importance of form as a generation of feeling and, in turn, the relationship of feeling to insight (Eisner 1993). The term 'form' is used in artistic and literary language to imply the manifestation that results from the fashioning of particular parts into a holistic, creative shape. It implies the creation of expressive frames that are visually, audibly and/or imaginatively perceivable. Whether the form created is justifiably called 'artistic' research depends upon the desire of the maker

to compose it into a form that expresses her idea of a feeling or a whole nexus of feeling. Form also exists in relationship with the reader or audience. A modernist view of form argues that '*seeing is believing*' and that form is obvious, apparent and can be singularly read. The postmodernist view of form applied to this research argues that form exists as the result of interactions between makers and audience and is multi-layered, seriated and affective. In other words, '*believing is seeing*'. Cassirer (1974: 144) contends:

> We may have met with an object of our ordinary sense experience a thousand times without ever having "seen" its form. We are still at a loss if asked to describe not its physical qualities or effects but its pure visual shape and structure. It is art that fills the gap.

In determining merit and value of research, this research aims to elicit the nature of significant form. The difficulty is that form is often 'known' in an instinctual sense before it can be fully revealed in traditional ways of seeing. The artist or critic may know what she thinks, but why she does what she does the way she does is less explainable. Such significance is implicit but not conventionally fixed. Langer (1957: 251) argues that:

> We cannot conceive significant form ex nihilo; we can only find it, and create something in its image; but because a man has seen the "significant form" of the thing he copies. He will copy it with that emphasis, not by measure, but by the selective, interpretive power of his intelligent eye.

Despite the inherent difficulties of identifying significant form, there is no doubt in the art and natural world that significant form exists. Significant forms possess an ambivalence of content which words alone cannot create and presents in a harmonic fashion. Sheffer (1957) defines form as being the configuration of an experience that shows a close relation between apperceptive unity and logical distinctions presenting both unity and diversity. Form is not only the evident shape of this research, but also notions of form *shape* the research process. In this way, form becomes a tacit determinant of the formulation, process, product and reading of the research.

The form of this research allowed individually conceived things and properties to be related to each other, either directly or indirectly to produce a holistic quilt. Sometimes in this quilt, elements were identifiable from one another, but within this, the assumption is that form is the inclusive unit to describe the research. Similarly, Langer (1957: 57) cautions, "Like living substance, a work of art is inviolable; break its elements apart, and they no longer are what they were and the whole image is gone." The form of this thesis was the

point from which all discourse emanates and through which intuitive apperception of the total occurs. While form, may have a level of universal communication, the form of the research remains contained within that research and was specific to the context and nature of the study.

The characteristics of form that applied to this research, and should be considered in determining the quality of the study presented included:

a) A vital, living, organic, evolutionary form;

b) A Semblance rather than resemblance;

c) Evidence of sentience and relatedness;

d) A form beyond just the physical shape;

e) A form that is embodied within the research;

f) A simplified form that is commensurable with the essentials of life;

g) A form that represents cycles of growth and decay;

h) The rhythmical, harmonic and discordant interrelated systems; and

i) A form of projection rather than copy.

The form of the research should convey my consciousness as researcher and also the consciousness of the participants. It will manifest the felt experiences from the research process and present these in a mode amendable to wider understanding. In this way, the research exists as a symbol that should speak to the consciousness of the audience and more broadly the educational community. Form is not a purely physical characteristic. Form resonates with the researcher's biases, recording what was deemed significant and presenting these as projected visions for art education.

The way an artist or researcher develops form can be described as the 'treatment' of form. *Treatment* is simply the mode of imitation applied to the study. Treatment is frequently unconscious and constantly evolving. Technique is the power of the researcher to produce a version of the affective captured in a real existence, or a realisation of things in the world. The aim of technique is to produce sensuous or emotional effect, which is brought to perception. The goal of technique is rarely representation, but rather semblance, an apparent form expressive of intuition and feeling. Cassirer (1974) argues that one of the triumphs of effective technique is the ability of the created form to make humanity see

commonplace things in their real shape and true light. This is not to say form is merely the result of techniques of imitation and presentation. On the contrary, the true value of technique is the manner in which it imbues the form with a dynamic and catalytic life.

Form is not static nor is it replicable. Form is also ultimately born in the imaginings of individual readers or viewers of the work. Cassirer (1974: 144) describes this in an analogy to the work of an artist:

> If we say of two artists that they paint "the same' landscape we describe our aesthetic experience very inadequately. From the point of view of art such a pretended sameness is illusory… For the artist does not portray or copy a certain empirical object – a landscape with its hills and mountains, its brooks and rivers. What he gives us is the individual and momentary physiognomy of the landscape. He wishes to express the atmosphere of things, the paly of light and shadow. A landscape is not 'the same' in early twilight, in midday heat, or on a rainy or sunny day.

Cassirer (1974) accentuates that form is defined by place and time. These may be physical contexts or social, political or cultural 'places' and 'times'. Location may be temporal and transient. The researcher is a collagist or bricoleur, often trying to pull pieces out from a form that is already there and then reconstruct it into a representation of the world as the researcher knows it. The art of quilting in research is about starting with a background and then building up blocks and layers. These become sensuous abstractions that are expressionistic rather than realistic. Areas within the form are constantly reworked or reinterpreted, and the quilt is sewn and overstitched. To this extent art-based research is never finished. The skilled researcher, like the artist, knows the point at which the study is under worked or at what point it becomes overworked.

Peculiarities of criticism help to determine the form it will take. Quality of form in criticism acts as a cue that allows the reader to enter the work under investigation in a manner which foregrounds significant moments and takes the reader beyond what is currently know, either implicitly or explicitly. All artistic forms hold meaning. Through critical interpretation, the viewer experiences interplay between form and context, both inside and outside the artwork. Lincoln (1991: 5) writes of the importance of establishing a holistic context for the interrelation of form:

> Comprehending meaning within a context, understanding the social and cultural milieu from which an artefact or program draws its particular expression, seeing

something fully, not particle-sized, but in its wholeness, being able to sympathise with, even if we would not particularly want to adopt it ourselves.

In art-based research methodologies seeing and telling is always transactional (Flinders and Eisner 1994: 353). The conceptual frameworks of the researcher, the participants and the audience mediate the understanding of significant form. To see form requires immersion, sympathy, openness and awareness. All the people involved in the research shape the form.

5.6 Postmodernism and form

The context for the form of this research is in constant movement. The postmodern notion of form underpinning this study is highly tentative. The characteristics of postmodernist form (Freedman 1991; Sullivan 1993; Denzin and Lincoln 1998) include things such as:

a) Verisimilitude;

b) Emotionality;

c) Personal responsibility;

d) An ethic of caring;

e) Multivocal texts;

f) Layering of meaning;

g) A sense of connection;

h) Self-reflection, self-examination and doubt;

i) A context-specific nature;

j) The hybrid nature of ideas;

k) Unity within diversity;

l) Empowerment of participants, and

m) An affective and sensual grounding of the study.

Postmodernist form is not an absolute entity, but rather changes as a result of time, place and context. Postmodernist form exists as a balance between intellectual, moral and aesthetic values. Different viewpoints change the focus of the form. Traditions and frames orientate the reading of the form. Form is not a single logical criterion or unitary concept, but instead encapsulates a multiplicity of interpretations. There are several aspects of form that can be used to gauge the quality of artistic research. These include:

▪ passion

- conversation
- catalyst, and
- artistic vision

These four aspects are described in the following sections.

5.6.1 Passion in research

One aspect of postmodernist research is the inclusion of passion and emotionality in the study. This is not new to artistic practice and if this research is to be considered as 'good' artistic inquiry, it must display a passion that takes the work beyond safe limits. A loving approach to research is encompassing and sensual and its force is apparent in the responses it engenders in the reader. Barrett (1991) argues that human responses are both intellectual and emotional. The way I perceive a situation and replay that for others, is an expression of both intellect and feeling. The term 'feeling' implies the tones of human consciousness replayed as a complex pattern of intellectual tensions. Denzin (1998: 17) refers to this level of emotional-charged research as "empowering, multi-sensual feminine subjectivity". Passion in an art-based methodology, is directed to the creativity and impact of the research.

An artistic piece of research should present feelings for contemplation by others. Instead of bracketing out emotional responses, these are foregrounded making passion and sensed feelings perceivable through the form of the research. Langer (1957: 260) describes this form of emotionality as "aesthetic emotion". She summarises this as being, "an intellectual triumph, overcoming boundaries of word-bound thought and achieving insight into literally unspeakable realities." As such, passion and emotionality in research can lead to a deeper intellectual experience, that makes the research "more essential, pre-rational and vital, something of the life-rhythms we share …the central facts of our brief, sentient existence" (Langer 1957: 260).

This research presents the beliefs, ideas and practices of the accomplished art teachers and reflects the human feelings of all involved and the impact of this on preservice art education. Passion serves to focus the research and express more fully what was seen and experienced. Using an artistic methodology, the assumption is that this research captures passion and presents it in a form that allows this passion to be 'read' by others. Passion

constitutes a vital aspect of art-based research as it provides the perspective from which people position themselves and make meaning of the work. Lather (1986) refers to this as being the 'new rigour of softness'.

5.6.2 Conversations

The idea of a link between the emotionality of the research and the manner in which the inquiry speaks to a broader audience is central to artistic inquiry. Artistic inquiry is concerned with fittingness and the manner in which the work communicates to others. Verisimilitude can be used to describe the rightness of fit, the way the form of the research coheres to engender a relationship with the viewer or reader. In a work of art, this is where viewers look at paintings and see themselves reflected in part by the works. This does not mean a mirror image portrait, but rather a work that presents illustrations and interpretations of the viewer's sensed experiences, thoughts and feelings. Jung (1964: 268) describes this as the "art of communion", the point at which a person, at any given moment can recognise his or her own countenance in the form presented through art. This level of interplay between reader and researcher is reliant upon skilled presentation by the researcher. Without a level of emotionality and passion, the research is doomed to be a well-written 'shelf piece' which will gather dust, rather than excite divergent responses! Langer (1957: 250) describes the distinction between well-crafted art and truly moving art when she states:

> A painter of no insight, judgement, or imagination worth mentioning might follow Goethe's suggestion for a picture, find a graceful and perfect model to impersonate, a noble character, and depict it with skilful accuracy- "getreue Nachahmung der Natur," as his mentor called it- in colours chosen with faultless taste; and produce a picture that might hang in every parlor, but mean absolutely nothing to the sensibilities of any real artist.

Notions of research as existing in a two-way conversation with the reader imply that meaning is framed and defined through the interactional experiences of all involved in the research and the readers of that research. In art-based inquiry, meaning exists as relational, responsive and restorative aesthetic conceptions, which are reshaped and encoded by the viewers or readers. As such, meanings are highly personal and dynamic and are founded in the social conditions, experiences and backgrounds of the readers. It can be argued that art-based research, like a work of art, is not fully complete until it has been exhibited. Most paintings are made with little understanding of the likely impact they might have. It is through the reactions of people to the work that their quality is determined. In this process,

the viewer adds to the work their spirit and selectively interprets the work. By doing this, the reader is creating a virtual space where the construction of reality occurs. Within this space, reality exists as a conversation between the research and the reader's context, and social and linguistic constructs. This reciprocal conversation allows critiques to emerge from expectations, beliefs, standards and knowledge of the readers.

As an artist creating a picture may do, art-based inquiry requires the researcher to assume the role of the reader and anticipate likely responses. In this way the research becomes a conversation, a reciprocal bond of intimacy between the work and viewer. The conversation boosts consciousness and insight, and leads to changes in thinking. A paradox to this notion of conversation is that while art-based inquiry should communicate with others, it is not universality that is the governor of success. Through art-based inquiries, the particular becomes the focus, yet these particulars should allow for a reciprocally educative and illuminative encounter for both the researcher and the reader. There can be no 'correct reading' but rather a conversation characterised by individuality, uncertainty and ambiguity. Through this process, the reader is changed and moved by the research. This conversation results in an interactive critique that is not about just change in this world, but rather "transcendence from it" (Lather 1998: 498). To this end, research based on artistic conceptions is not fully complete until it has been activated by the visions of the reader. As Kant notes, "In whatever way the Deity should be made known to you, and even if He should reveal Himself to you: it is you who must judge whether you are permitted to believe in Him." (Courtney 1997: 9).

Cassirer (1974) argues that the deep reading implied by notions of conversation combine both the subjective and objective worlds. The success of this conversation is not marked by the level of acceptance or infection the research may have, but rather by the degree of intensification and illumination that results from the conversation. To this extent, credibility lies in the eye of the viewer. There can be no single authoritative reading. Denzin (1998) argues that the most powerful conversations may be conflicting, messy and open-ended.

5.6.3 Catalyst

For an artwork to be of merit, it must move the viewer. This movement can include physical, emotional and/or intellectual change, by which the viewer is in some way transformed. Good research, like good art, is inevitably idealistic and visionary. As it often exists before its time, it may be looked upon with suspicion and take some time to be accepted into practice. Catalytic efficacy contends that the quality of research is in part defined by the "degree to which the research process re-orients, focuses and energises participants" (Lather 1986: 67). Good research should be meaningful and important and energise experience and intensify insight and feelings. It should give rise to social, cultural or educational advancement and formulate new ways of thinking and feeling. The main catalyst should be to think or feel differently. Aristole described philosophical inquiry as "beginning in wonder and ending in awe" (Murdick and Grinstead 1992: 64). As Cassirer (1974: 149) states, artistic inquiry should always give rise to "motion, rather than mere emotion".

Linked to ideas of catalyst, is the concept of actionability. While the two terms are related, they may also be quite distinct. For example, a work may be catalytic in the manner in which it changes people's feelings and understandings, but the ideas may for a number of reasons fail to be enacted. Actionability is limited by a number of external and internal factors that may operate independent of the research itself. Eisner (1998) argues that when an artist's work is done well, the work becomes accessible. One goal of art-based educational inquiry is the contribution made to the improvement of education. Courtney (1997) proposes that one criteria for valuing art-based inquiry is the extent to which it improves art, education or art education. This improvement may be in actionable models or procedures, or more broadly through empowerment of individuals and collective conscious raising that provides worthwhile impetus towards improved educational outcomes. Kvale (1992: 23-24) separates these two distinct notions of efficacy. The first he calls "pragmatic validity" to describe the actionability associated with a piece of research that leads to changed enactment in art educational practices. On the other hand, he sees "communicative validity " as being a more productive notion of validity for artistic inquiry as it is determined by the manner in which a piece of research engenders dialogue and stimulates meaningful conversations. Certainly, it is the contention of this research that artistic inquiry is not about usefulness. People rarely buy a painting because it is deemed

'useful'. People tend to buy a painting because they feel some level of emotional bond to the work, the painting in some way 'speaks to them' or they perceive in the painting depth that would make people want to talk about the work or view it repeatedly. In this way, artistic inquiry is not predictable, confirmable nor practically useful, but rather speaks of passion and humanness.

5.6.4 Artistic vision

It is an assumption of this research that artistic inquiry involves looking with a subjective eye and presenting this vision in a way that makes the vision broadly seeable. The artistic eye is not a passive eye that receives impressions of things, but rather a constructive eye that nurtures possibilities to become actualities. Cassirer (1974: 145) believes that it is the ability of artistic inquiry to give form to ideas that gives it its strength. He claims that "the revelation of this inexhaustibility of the aspects of things is one of the great privileges and one of the deepest charms of art."

Artistic vision is a significant part of the inquiry approach in artistically crafted research. Dreams and intuition are part of this vision. Eysenck (1996: 170) argues that creative ideas are largely generated by intuition rather than rational thought. Dreams and imaginings are integral to artistic research. This is not to say that imaginings and irrational thoughts overwhelm artistic inquiry, rather artistic inquiry captures creative imaginings and intuition and combines these with experiences to set them apart and make them special. It is this 'setting apart' from normality and making special that is at the heart of artistic vision and needs to be considered when deciding the validity of artistic inquiry.

5.7   The form of artistic inquiry

Aligned to the ideas of passion, conversation, catalyst and artistic vision as the forms that define artistic inquiry, there are several characteristics that combine to give artistic inquiry its unique form. These include:
- Imagination and creativity,
- The use of symbolic representation,
- Internal ambiguity,
- Frames of perspective, and
- Persuasion.

5.7.1 Imagination and creativity.

Imagination and individuality are critical to artistic inquiry. Flinders (1994) argues that good artistic research is imaginative as it involves making sensitive judgements, attending to patterns, using language expressively, employing taste and sensibility, deciding on form and achieving aesthetic coherence. It is likely that in artistic inquiry, imagination and creativity act in a synergistic manner to produce understandings. The imagination of the artist does not arbitrarily invent the form of things. Cassirer (1974: 145-146) argues that art shows these forms in their, "true shape making them visible and recognisable. The artist chooses a certain aspect of reality, but this process of selection is at the same time a process of objectification"

According to Eysenck (1996: 83) creativity is a:

> Dispositional trait or ability which enables a person to put forward ideas, or execute and produce works of imagination, having the appearance of novelty which are immediately or in due course accepted by experts and peers as genuine contributions having social value".

Creative responses are original and imply a level of relevancy. However, judgements of relevancy are often decided by orthodox judges, and in actual fact, a lack of traditional relevancy, may be the defining feature of originality. Eminence as judged by reputation is liable to reflect the status quo, with peer acclaim rarely recognising truly creative work. To this extent, creative achievement is not simply reliant upon the skills, abilities or traits of the researcher, but rather may be determined by environmental variables such as politics, socio-economic conditions and educational systems.

5.7.2 The use of symbolic representation

The notion of creativity and imagination in research is linked to the importance of symbolic interpretation for making meaning in art. The symbols used in art are visual ways in which inner essences are converted to outward expression. Langer (1957: 281) argues that sign and symbol are knotted together in the production of "those fixed realities that we call 'facts' ". In artistic inquiry, the so-called 'facts' are symbolic representations of recorded and unrecorded observations, feelings, momentary insights and tacit signs. The view that a

dissertation represents a symbolic encapsulation of an artistic adventure captures effectively the manner in which artistic inquiry presents reality through creativity and imagination.

By treating inquiry as an art, research is thereby likened to an expressive form. The ideas proffered through the symbols of writing, speaking or visuals, communicate beyond the conscious, and provoke in the reader or viewer representational ideas. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) allude to symbolic representation in research as being considered almost as a hyperreality, whereby the words or images used in a dissertation provide a more 'real' view of reality than a description of reality could encompass. This hyperreality results from the manner in which symbols are socially, culturally, spiritually and imaginatively saturated. When these ideas are conveyed through the symbolic representation of research, the reader holistically combines these aspects to create a picture beyond that which the researcher has conceived.

5.7.3 Ambiguity

Artistic inquiry is multi-perspectival and multi-symbolic. As in a painting, contrast and ambiguity add to the interest and symbolic power of the work. Similarly, ambiguity in artistic inquiry builds more complex constructs and enhances the communication generated by the work. Ambiguity can occur at many levels in artistic inquiry. Firstly, the data collected may be contrasting and conflicting. Rather than this being seen as a reason to 'retest' or a flaw in experimental design, the presentation of multiple perspectives empowers the research participants, by valuing equally the contributions made and not privileging one position over another. Secondly, the researcher may want to express a range of ideas, which may be unresolved or inconclusive. This does not detract from the analysis of data, but rather provides spaces where the reader can consider informed choices and develop a personal response to the research. Thirdly, ambiguity may exist because of external factors such as physical and cultural environments. For example, participants may speak in idealistic terms of espoused theories of good teaching, but the realities of the physical or cultural location of the school, may mean that actions recorded in practice do not reflect espoused ideals. This level of ambiguity is foregrounded, as it is indicative of the nature of external and internal decisions the participants face and underpins the motives for their actions or inaction. Finally, ambiguity exists in the reading of the thesis. The public

response to the work is liable to be highly diverse and symbolise the variety of backgrounds of the readers and the extent to which they locate personal meanings within it.

5.7.4 Persuasion

It is inescapable in artistic inquiry that the symbols used to present the inquiry will inevitably attempt to persuade the reader to a particular point of view. Barrett (1991) contends that criticism, at the heart of artistic inquiry, is inherently a form of persuasive rhetoric. Subjectivity and perspective inevitably contribute to the final shape of the research and determine the messages it communicates. Courtney (1997) contends that research is bound by the way in which it is framed. Richardson (1990: 28) cautions that, "Knowledge is always partial, limited and contestual, there is no escape from subjectivity. Subjectivity is constructed…not fixed". As framing and the resultant subjectivity and persuasiveness are unavoidable, Lincoln (1995) attests the need for what she terms "critical subjectivity". This is the need to decentre your perception, in much the same way as an artist does when she stands back from a painting to determine how others might 'see' the image presented. Eisner (1993) argues that this decentring must be incorporated into the research process. The researcher in artistic inquiry needs to develop a sense of refinement of sensibilities that allows increased perceptivity, and to be able to oscillate between the role of researcher and reader. In this way, persuasiveness still exists, but it is tempered by an external 'eye' that is asking, 'how will others see what I have done?' and 'has my subjectivity and persuasiveness distorted my vision or has it enabled clearer seeing and understanding?'

5.8 Conclusion

Artistic inquiry strives to produce a persuasive argument that is presented through the symbolic interface of language. In art, qualitative judgements are made about form and expressive quality. These concepts establish the basis for determining the merit and worth of artistic inquiry. Artistic research serves primarily as a catalyst, and as such, ideas of worth extend beyond the inherent qualities of the work itself to the reader or viewer. Quality artistic inquiry is marked by the extent to which it provides opportunities for deriving meaning and improving education.

The manner in which form for this research is conceived is epitomised in the writing of Gerhard Richter (1990) (in Harrison and Wood 1992: 1047). He tells of the struggles between intention and results, and the manner in which a piece of artistic inquiry frequently adopts a 'life of its own' beyond its intended form. This quote makes a fitting conclusion to issues of form that are addressed in this chapter. It should be read with the view that notions of 'picture' exist in place for dissertations and the way they serve to communicate the ideas of the researcher.

> Any consideration that I make about the 'construction' of a picture is false and if the execution is successful then it is only because I partially destroy it or because it works anyway, because it is not disturbing and looks as though it is not planned. Accepting this is often intolerable and also impossible, because as a thinking, planning human being it humiliates me to find that I am powerless to that extent, making me doubt my competence and any constructive ability. The only consolidation is that I can tell myself that despite all this I made the pictures even when they take the law into their own hands, do what they like with me although I didn't want them to, and simply come into being somehow. Because anyway I am the one who has to decide what they should ultimately look like (the making of pictures consists of a large number of yes and no decisions and a yes decision in the end). Seen like this, the whole thing seems quite natural to me though, or better, nature-like, living, in comparison with the social sphere as well.

6   Critical appreciation: The art of description, interpretation, narrative and quilting.

Piecing means that the layers of fabric on a quilt are sewn to each other along common edges. The result is a single layer of fabric.
Quilting is needed to hold the layers together.

6.1   Introduction

As described in the last chapter, this research adopted a methodology of arts-based inquiry, based on notions of appreciation and critique. This has significance for the manner in which the research was written. The dissertation encapsulated through narrative the salient observations, inferences and feelings resulting from the research. Meaning was constructed through different forms of textual representation. Representation was the process through which the contents of consciousness resulting from the research process were transformed into a public and accessible. The writing provided insight into visions and instincts elicited within the research. The form of language chosen was grounded in the practices of art critics and art appreciation, and as such, the symbolic devices used included description, interpretation, themes, narrative, persuasion, imagination and judgement. This research used an analogy of quilting to describe the way conversations are patterned and pieced to create single layers of fabric that carry the ideas and meanings derived from the accomplished teachers. The sewing devices used in the construction of the quilted narrative include framing, positioning, perspective, collage, spaces in text, socially constructed meaning, discourse and context, openness and reconstruction, voice and identification of self as being a significant part of research. The issues surrounding the form of description and interpretation used within this thesis are explored fully in this chapter.

6.2   The critic

The descriptions and interpretations used in this research are modelled on the work of critics. Critics aim to expand awareness to subtleties, structures and meanings within a performance or art object. The critic converts visions and intuitions of a work into a public form. Eisner (1998: 86) describes the complexity of this process:

> The task of the critic is to perform a mysterious feat well: to transform the qualities of a painting, play, novel, classroom or school, or act of teaching and learning into public form that illuminates, interprets, and appraises that qualities that have been experienced.

Eisner (1998: 86) argues that the primary function of critical writing is educational, providing material that enable people's perceptions to be increased and understandings to

deepen. Barrett (1991) describes the educational function of critics as the chronicling the present for the future. There are a number of devices critics use to document their appreciation of a work and to make this educational. Firstly, critics need to know both the artwork and their audience very well. They are aware of what their readers know and do not know about the artwork described. Barrett (1991) indicates that, critics need to be mindful that most readers have not seen or experienced the work being written about, and are unlikely to ever see it.   The critic renders the image vividly through the use of language. Eisner (1998: 236) acknowledges that the critic must "perceive the qualities the work possesses, understand their artistic antecedents, appraise the work's aesthetic merits, and then build a bridge through language that makes the work visible". Bresler (1994: 3) argues that the main aim of the critic is to, "render the essentially ineffable qualities constituting works of art into a language that will help others perceive the work more deeply, aiming to lift the veils that keep the eyes from seeing". The main language tool used by critics is writing. Critics write to "be read, to inform and to convince" (Barrett 1991: 91). Critics use writing as the symbolic tool to signify what they most want the readers to notice.

The second device used by critics relates to this selective process, as it involves the way critics judge and allocate value to objects or practices. Critics do not simply describe and interpret artworks, as Eisner argues (1998) every criticism is a reconstruction. Critics use selection, persuasion and imagination to construct different descriptions and interpretations of an artwork. Criticism consequentially reflects a level of evaluation and judgement. This can be either tacitly underpinned by the critique or stated obviously, but either way, critical appreciation exists as a value-laden practice. This point is accentuated by Anderson (1993: 204) who writes:

> The work means what the critic says it means and is worth what the critic says it is
> worth- given the critic's theoretical foundations and individual point of view. This
> evaluation is either stronger or weaker argument (not truth) based on the critic's
> point of view and referenced to publicly observable criteria and stated or
> understood premises within a particular aesthetic theory.

The final point to note is that critics rely heavily upon a reciprocal relationship with the reader. Vision cannot be separated from socio-cultural factors influencing both the critic and the readers. Description and interpretation are dynamic and socially bound. This gives

rise to a multiplicity of meanings to be derived from a single artwork and from a single piece of critical writing. As Barrett (1991: 9) signals:

> Any one critic may note something that another has overlooked or has not mentioned. One critic presents an interpretation that contributes to another critic's previous interpretation. These enrich our understanding of a work of art. They also enrich our understanding of the responsiveness of human beings.

Barrett sees multiplicity as being a significant part of enhancing the depth of community critique.

The term 'critical appreciation' (Anderson 1990) involves combining the processes of both 'critique' and 'appreciation' to develop a way of interpretation that perceives both relative value in tasks and phenomena and evaluates how well tasks are performed. Critical appreciation insinuates the integration of both external and internal criteria to resolve self-determined goals related to understanding, appreciating and then critiquing a work. Anderson (1990) argues that self-knowledge is crucial to the development of critical appreciation.

Critique is composed of interrogation of overlapping, multiple meanings. Eisner (1997: 5) believes that there is an, "intimate relationship between our conception of what the products of research are to look like and the way we go about doing research." Critical appreciation exists as complex relationships with the critic, the work and the manner in which the work exists in the world. Rather than viewing the critic as authority, critical appreciation assumes that interactivity and responsiveness make it possible for the human instrument of interpretation to achieve maximum adaptability and insight. Under this "disruptive model of interpretation" (Gooding-Brown 1999: 1), conversations between the artist and the critic, the critic and the work, and the reader with all these social agents, are seen as the way in which knowledge is created

6.3   The language of criticism

Ching Hao, a Chinese theorist of the tenth century (in Langer 1957: 99), stated:

> The master of the ink can heighten or lower his tone at will, to express the depth or shallowness of things, creating what seems like a natural brilliance, not derived from the line-work of the brush.

So too, good critical appreciation creates congruence between things that have been seen and felt and the telling of the story, seamlessly, to an audience.   Art criticism uses language that is thoughtful and aims at increasing understanding and appreciation of a phenomenon and its role in society. As with the master's brushstroke in Chinese calligraphy, the critic's text is never intended to be accurate, true or complete, but rather it is a symbolic presentation that is greater than mere representation. Marshall and Reason (1993: 117) note that research is about communication "for me, for us and for them: it speaks to three audiences". Finlay and Knowles (1995: 132) also make the distinction between presentation and representation when they state:

> I am not merely looking, I am seeing. When I write, I am acutely aware that language is my medium. And I believe that when I write, the end product, responds, not corresponds, to what I see and understand.

In this way language is inter-subjective. In critical writing there are "different inclusions and exclusions, different emphases, and considerable variance in the language used to characterise the work" (Barrett 1991: 91). The language used is vivid and descriptive as this makes possible the visioning of a virtually shared experience. Similarly, Eisner (1998: 28) states that "language shapes, focuses, and directs our attention; it transforms our experience in the process of making it public." By the use of vivid language, he (Eisner 1998: 22) argues that good critical writing has the:

> Ability to transform experience into a public form called text, which, when carefully crafted, allows us to participate in a way of life… thus, the writer starts with qualities and ends with words. The reader starts with words and ends with qualities.

In this way, effective critical appreciation allows the reader to experience a vicarious 'knowing' of the experiences of the critic and read into these experiences personal feelings, contexts and intuitions. Text is aesthetically shaped into a form that expressively communicates. Barrett likens this process to reading. He states (Barrett 1991: 90):

> It is like reading a sentence: The sentence makes sense depending on the meaning of each word, but the words only make meaning according to the meaning of the sentence.

In this way criticism exists as unified whole, that is encountered aesthetically. Critics produce a substantial work by vividly describing both what is there and what is not there, drawing description and interpretation from external, contextual sources and internal, intuitive states. Passion and feeling are as much a part of this process as is clarity and

literacy. Finlay and Knolwes (1995: 139) use an analogy to signify the holistic vision of the experiences of the critic. They write:

> Yes, you can produce some "like" images. Drawing a horse! It looks like a horse, but if it does not (capture) … the energy, the power of a horse, it is not good art. If that happens in research, if in the process of interpretation you lose the energy and the emotion, the humanness, then the research is not good research.

The basic components of critical appreciation are description and interpretation. It is the character and richness of these that determines the quality of criticism.

6.4   Description

Description is the medium on which interpretations and evaluations are built. In this study, description involved giving an account in words of what was observed and felt as a result of speaking with the accomplished art teachers and visiting them in their classrooms. "Thick description" (Denzin 1994) was used in this study as it combined description with interpretation, and gave a context for the experiences sensed throughout the conversations with the teachers. Eisner (1991) argues that description is both an act of representation as well as an act of intervention. Description was not neutral as I chose what to describe, how to describe that thing and what not to describe. Walker (1996: 81-83) indicates that "it is through the exclusion and inclusion brought about in description that meanings are closed and opened". He contends that description is a product of both direct comments related to the nature of the artwork (in this research, the teaching) and intertextuality. *Intertextuality* refers to the contextual relationships surrounding a work, which include the school environment, political influences, resources and time. Intertextuality in description means that every signifying practice or observation was actually a field of interwoven sign systems. In this way, description was inseparably linked to interpretation and evaluation. Langer (1957: 98) describes this process as "transformation of data" whereby description consisted of rendering a desired appearance of an artwork by the engendering of an equivalent sense-impression, rather than a literally similar one. In aesthetic inquiry, description involved presenting a total picture that was detailed and vivid enabling the reader to get a clear and holistic understanding.

6.5   Interpretation

Humans have the natural desire to transform personally felt and experienced phenomena into a form that can be communicated to and experienced by others. Madison (1993: 1) argues that all human beings are "ceaselessly engaged in the business of interpretation… since we are all beings who, as thinking beings, are ever seeking understanding". Anderson (1990: 138) defines interpretation as, "the public act of communicating to someone else the meaning one has derived from something." It is a creative and open-ended task that is based on evidence, and exists within a cultural context. The nature of interpretation in this study was governed by the needs of the researcher, what was trying to be understood and felt through the research and the critical structure, in this case, aesthetic inquiry, through which the interpretation was framed. In critical appreciation, the critic decides among a multiplicity of possible interpretations as to which standpoint most effectively conveys a rich picture to the readers. Interpretation is about creating patterns from the data collected. Eisner (1992: 30) views interpretation as an "artistic activity" and the writing up of a research study as an "aesthetic problem."

Denzin (1994) contends that interpretation is the manner in which description is transformed from recounting field notes to making decisions about what will be written, what will be included, how it will be represented and so on. It is what Eisner (1998: 98) describes as an "iterative" process that acts like "markers along the way…plotting the past and providing cues to the future." Walker (1996) argues that depth of interpretation is a sign of effective critical writing. Critics avoid premature closure on interpretation, rather opening up the critique to multi-levels of interpretation. Anderson (1991: 17) asserts that there is not a single, definitive interpretation, but rather "multiple types of meaning, varying from group to group and culture to culture, built into our universal human drive to create and seek meaning."   In this way, interpretation exists as the mutual and simultaneous shaping of ideas, with every part of description, evaluation and interpretation influencing everything else. Guba and Lincoln (1982: 25) describe interpretation as a process where, "each element interacts with all others in ways that change them all, while simultaneously resulting in something which we as outside observers label as outcomes."

Research is about describing what happens and placing observations and sensed experiences in a context. To do this, critical appreciation relies on narratives and language

to act as a symbol to encapsulate ideas and visions. Denzin and Lincoln (1998: 30) describe interpretation as being both an "artful and political" process. Denzin (1989: 142) states:

> Interpretation: the act of interpreting; creates the conditions for understanding, may be emotional, cognitive, spurious, or authentic: as a temporal process; is always symbolic… descriptive, contextual, relational-interactional; all interpretations should be relational, interactional, contextual, dialogic and polyphonic.

Furthermore, he contends that the meaning resulting from interpretation is inevitably interactional, interpretive, open-ended, ambiguous, conflictual and reconclusive.

Interpretation involves both description and engaged judgement. Engaged judgement (Duncum 1988: 11-12) encompasses making visible in the interpretation the nature of personal judgements. Interpretation becomes the product of a grid of experiences constructed to consider the "social, the economic, the psychological and the aesthetic" (Duncum 1988: 12). To this end, interpretation can be compared to a change in key in music, where material becomes transformed and distinct through the process of interpretation. Stokrocki (1997: 37) identifies five stages in the interpretation process:

a) State your pre-understanding of the phenomenon and explain its context;

b) State that your information is probably true;

c) Describe the phenomenon in totality and with coherence

d) Search for etymological, traditional and philosophical meanings in phenomena; and

e) Apply findings to your own life and state how the experience has changed you.

While this list serves to provide an understanding of some aspects of interpretation it oversimplifies the complexity of the interpretive process. Interpretation is a product of a manifold combination of historical, recreative and judicial considerations and involves encapsulating what the phenomenon is about, how and why it exhibits certain characteristics and the effect of that phenomenon. Interpretation is the most important aspect of criticism. Barrett (1991: 8) argues its effectiveness "results in an understanding of (that artwork) and renders judgement much easier, and perhaps superfluous. Judgement of an artwork without interpretation, is both irresponsive and irresponsible". Furthermore, apart from contributing to the understanding and judgement of an artwork, interpretation

should arouse an appetite to know more about the work by providing a framework for approaching the work.

Interpretation is a difficult undertaking and all interpretations are not equal. Barrett (1991) argues that good interpretations are well-argued, grounded in both theory and context, reasoned and reasonable, persuasive, believable and readily acceptable. Interpretation is about transforming strongly felt experiences into a public form and this is inevitably a challenging undertaking. Eisner (1997: 7) cautions:

> It is about the trade-offs that are inevitable in the selection of any option. It is about exploring the edges and re-examining the meaning of research.

It requires seeing the subtle, yet highlighting the significant. Interpretation is about sharing your feelings and experiences with others, who can only hope for some level of vicarious contact with the original. Finlay and Knowles (1995: 113) summarise the complexity of this process:

> Some artists are able to very quickly develop an interpretation and get it "right" the first time on paper or canvas, and they sit back and say, "Yes, that is what I meant, that is what I assumed. Other times (the artist) has to rework and rework, and you sense that the artist is rethinking, reworking the interpretation. It si not just simply a matter of technical skill- that may be part of it- but it is also reworking the interpretation.

Description and interpretation exist as products of the symbolic use of language. The following sections explore notions of symbolism within critical appreciation. Writing is viewed as a form of quilting process and the language tools of critical writing are described.

6.6 Writing aesthetic criticism

Langer (1957: 21) believes that written language is the means by which we "conceive the intangible, incorporeal things we call our ideas, and the equally inostensible elements of our perceptual world that we call facts". Writing is a highly developed form of symbolic representation that combines the conceptual and the emotional aspects of human communication. Through critical appreciative writing, the critic aims to give the viewer vicarious experience of the artwork, and lift perception beyond the mundane. Critical writing is directed to both the inner voice of the critic and an outer voice that presents a

transactional conversation about a work of art between the critic, the work and the reader. Critical writing is personal and yet is premised on the idea of being read by an audience.

Critical writing is based on detailed description of the critic's observations and experiences of the artwork. This description is colourful, holistic and emotionally charged and is characterised by depth and honesty. Murdick and Grimstead (1992: 60) indicate that a critic needs to:

> Learn to incorporate detailed observation, and then their own sense of charm of the picture, into their formal criticism, making that criticism less mechanical in the end, a scholarly analysis if it is any good reveals a personal vision.

Description includes contextual and historical considerations, comparisons and positioning, and an awareness of cultural and emotional underpinnings to the work. The critic consults both internal and external sources to locate information. This information is arranged expressively, with the aim of enlightening the reader about an artwork. Critical writing combines description, interpretation and evaluation in a way that is narrative, informative and enlightening. These three elements are not isolated in the critique, but rather coupled to create a holistic visioning of the artwork.

The critic aims for robustness, inconsistencies and patterns as a way of reading the artwork to reveal a full, complex and deep semblance of the work. The critical writing device apparent in this research was narrative. Through the presentation of narrative, the voices of the accomplished teachers and the researcher, and the inner voices of the readers, could be heard and reflected upon.

6.7   Narrative and quilting

The model of critical writing adopted in this study was based on quilting and narrative. This approach presented interpretation in a collaged fashion, where each narrative remained clear and distinct, while at the same time, working artistically with the other narratives to create a meaningful assemblage.

Stories were used as a way to share experiences and to pass on aspects of current and past experiences to future generations. A quilted view of narrative involved the compilation of

small swatches of stories that were collaged together to form a quilt that holds meaning. It was an artistic narrative based on assemblages of the original to form something new.

The purpose of the narrative is to present an educational story that opens up visions for the reader. Richardson (1990: 65) contends that the aim of narratives are to permit, "individuals, the society, or the group to explain its experiences of temporality, because narrative grows out of temporality." She claims that narrative is, "the best way to understand human experience, because it is the way humans understand their own lives. It is the closest to human experience and hence the least falsifying." Good quality narratives are characterised by an aesthetic coherence that is formed by allowing the individual parts of the collage or quilting process to show their source and identity, while at the same time combining collectively to form a vision that is greater than the sum of all the parts. While the critic speaks as a narrator, in critical appreciation there is awareness that the voice of the narrator externalises the voices of all research participants. Davis and Harre (1992: 45) argue that narratives are always constructed of multiple conversations. Associated with this idea, narratives are subjective and positioned by the inclusion and exclusion of certain conversations. Narratives present a lived story, which is composed of multiple perspectives. To this extent, narrative is a form of culturally-based text. Denzin (1998: 7) describes this as "lived textuality" a process where multiple voices comingle. Denzin (1998: 11) argues that narratives, no matter how well constructed can never fully capture felt relationships and conversations. He contends that narratives come alive only through social-cultural interpretation, "In discourse cultural values are enacted and social structures come alive." The strength of a narrative therefore lies in its ability to explore possibilities and potential. Lincoln (1989: 180) argues that it is through narrative that, "futures can be imagined and partially experienced and savoured."

Traditionally, critically appreciative narratives are conceived by the critic. Under postmodern views of narratives, the authorship of the narrative is extended to include many voices. The assumption behind a multi-vocal approach to narrative is that no single story has authority (Cydney 1995). Mouffe (Nadesan and Elenes 1998: 253) argues that a critical appreciative approach stresses that narratives exist within a pluralist framework that allows for different forms of individuality.   This approach assumes that a critic cannot speak for others, but rather makes interpretations of what is said. Thus the narrative for this research

was comprised of the actual voices of the accomplished teachers. They told their stories and these were interpreted collectively by both the accomplished teachers, as educators and artists, and me as critic and researcher. Initially, the accomplished teachers needed to be convinced of their expertise and the importance of their stories. By asking the accomplished teachers to speak and recording and replaying this narrative to form the story, the teachers were given voice. I also had voice in the story. Through the use of the first person, "I" in writing, the narrative has a sense of authorship, representational of the accomplished teachers and myself.

A good narrative in critical writing should be crafted with awareness to aesthetic form and beauty. Eisner (1993: 54) suggests that "aesthetically crafted writing has the capacity to foster empathetic experience, thus making possible a form of understanding that would otherwise be unlikely". The story told should be beautiful and captivating. If these elements are present, it is likely that the narrative has the power to transform the understandings of the researcher into a form that helps the reader to notice what they have learned not to notice. Eisner (1995: 3) believes that artistically presented narratives, "provide an image fresh to behold, and in so doing provide a complement to the colorless abstraction of theory with renderings that are palpable". Barone (1990: 309) describes effective narrative as being a "good marriage of aesthetic form and substance". The narrative becomes a tool for fostering change. Finlay (1995: 134) argues that if a narrative is to be judged as a work of art it must, "generate an emotional experience and, at some level, it grabs your gut and you say "Yes, it turns me on"." The quality of a narrative becomes largely determined by its ability to evoke a vicarious response.

Critical appreciative narrative writing is characterised by a level of intellectual wrestling. The critic should accurately and democratically represent the stories of others. To achieve this, it is likely that the critic becomes personally engaged with the narrative, and yet at the same time remains able to think outside the constructions that are inherently socialised into the narrative. As le Compte (1993: 18) argues, the critic should be aware that:

> The text created within the study, whether by the researcher alone or in collaboration with participants, and the sense of reality it conveys, is mediated by and situated not just within itself, but within constraining networks of time, place, beliefs and historical context.

Aesthetic critical narrative generally uses language that demonstrates passion, commitment and a democratic political stance. It is subjective and personal; honest and open; and employing sense, configuration, connotation and intention to communicate. Narrative is persuasive yet believable. It is logical and consistent, but open to ambiguity. Critical appreciation relies on a narrative that is context sensitive and informed.

The narrative in this study was presented as a collaged quilt. Gooding-Brown (1999: 5) describes the interpretation of collaged narrative as an act of "palimpsest" as the narrative is not broken down, analysed and discussed until it no longer holds any of its original artistic or aesthetic value. Rather, interpretation of collaged narrative establishes links and makes personal connections between various parts of the collage and montage of words. Gooding-Brown (1999: 5) describes her personal approach to collaged narrative:

> Basically all I did was to make notes on it (the phenomenon) … tear it down the middle… segmented. I was going to use scissors but I thought that would be too definite while the separation was ambiguous.

While the narrative in this thesis was not constructed from tearing up the accomplished teachers' stories, the stories were quilted together to form patterns, themes and organised meaning structures. This form of organisation enabled the individuality of the voices to be strong within a framework of combined stories chorusing to produce an aesthetic response.

6.8   Representation and symbolism

<div align="center">Symbols were very important to quilters.</div>
<div align="center">(Hinson 1966: 144)</div>

Language works at a symbolic level to carry meanings and persuasions that can never be fully explained or precisely defined, and yet lead to tangible ideas and imaginings, largely beyond the obvious constructs of reasoned argument. Eisner (1998: 235) describes the "trick" of being able to write effective criticism in the ability of the narrative presented to "use a form of representation through which imagination, affect, and belief can be given a public, articulate presence". Jung (1964) makes the distinction between a sign and symbol in the manner in which a narrative conveys its message. He believes that a *sign* is always a reduction of the concept it represents, such as the signs indicating 'no smoking' or the 'baby change room' at the airport. Conversely, a *symbol* carries concepts well beyond what its obvious and immediate meaning. Jung (1964: 55) argues that:

Symbols, moreover, are natural and spontaneous products. No genius has ever sat down with pen in hand and said, "Now I am going to invent a symbol." No one can take a more or less rational thought, reached as a logical conclusion or by deliberate intent, and then give it symbolic form.

Jung suggests that symbols result from collective, socio-cultural valuing, as is evidenced in great art, music or religion. This collective notion of symbolism stresses the manner in which the symbolic meaning of narrative is formed as a result of cultural construction, where meaning is negotiated, imaginative and contextual. Eisner (1993: 7) states that narratives and the resultant interpretations are constructed, "since experience can never be displayed in the form in which it initially appeared, the act of representation is also an act of invention." Constructions become separate and independent ways of knowing that extends beyond those aspects presented in the narrative. Davis and Harre (1992: 45) contend that all conversation is a form of social interaction. They suggest that "a conversation unfolds through the joint action of all participants as they make (or attempt to make) their own and each other's actions socially determinate." In this way, what is contained in a critical appreciative narrative evolves and changes as a conversation develops between the critic and the reader. This conversation forms web-like patterns where meaning is paradoxical and embedded in social, historical and cultural contexts. In this way, meaning is made through configuration of the narrative in relation to personally conceived contextual aspects such as subtleties of practice, nuances and voice. The narrative is not presented for voyeuristic reading, but rather as an interactive, multi-perspectival symbol that is read within a context based on a two-way conversation. Denzin (1998: 10) argues that in narrative there are three parties, "the speaker, the addressee (the person who hears) and the super-addressee, a hypothetical third person who is presumed to understand what is being spoken". In this way, the narrative provides a catalyst for the development of shared and enacted knowledge. Denzin (1998: 15) contends that narrative is therefore, "always productive (as it) brings a situation into play, enunciates evaluations of the situation, and extends action into the future." Thus, critical appreciative narrative is not about reflecting or representing a situation, but rather it is in itself a situation or art object that stimulates future imaginings or actions.

Through the imaginative subconscious, interpretations arise from the narrative and significance is visioned. As Langer (1957: 244) notes: "The assignment of meaning is a

shifting, kaleidoscopic play, probably below the threshold of consciousness, certainly outside the pole of discursive thinking." Eisner (1998: 186) argues that imagination is a significant component in the interpretation of narrative data, especially when the "data are messy, the processes studied unpredictable, and the contingencies complex, imagination enables us to make sense out of the situation."

Critical aesthetic writing is characterised by persuasive use of language and judgements, that interplay with imagination to determine how the narrative is 'read'. The critic uses persuasive language to position the reader in terms of the judgements being made. This combination makes judgements appear reasonable and believable. The critic uses the narrative to instil ideas, to challenge the readers' current beliefs and to open up areas for imagining or discussion. By organising the narrative in a certain way, assigning particular themes, including some aspects and not including others, the critic is directing the responsive effect of the narrative. The written text becomes a "meeting place" (Denzin and Lincoln 1998: 13) where voices, imagination and written interpretations come together. In this discursive space Mouffe (Nadesan and Elenes 1998: 249) argues that, "no subject position is ever completely fixed, or sutured, and is always subverted by its over determination".

6.9   Themes, blocks and spaces

The 'meeting place' Denzin (1998: 13) describes is not always a comfortable place. The spaces provided by narrative can be problematic, as meaning is synthesised in these spaces. Often perceptual information gathered in an initial response, might be revisited and challenged as a result of different interpretations of the narrative. This requires "synthetic intuitive projection" (Anderson 1993: 206), a form of reading that is beyond analytic intake and places a greater demand on the reader. To encourage this step to be more easily made, critics frequently use themes in their narrative. The thematic approach was adopted in this study and involved linking key ideas through the analogy of quilting *blocks*. A block in quilting is one complete pattern of fabric. It could be one cut piece of material postage stamp size to a piece of material large enough to cover a bed. It may be any number of pieces of fabric sewed together as long as it forms one complete pattern (Hinson 1966: 28). When the blocks are set together, patterns emerges which are not obvious from looking at a single block (Walker 1983: 13). The greater the richness of these connecting themes, the

easier it is for the reader to construct meaning from the text. A key strategy in constructing understanding is by organising interpretation round central ideas. Hake (1937: 8) contends in relation to quilting:

> So that this filling shall be orderly and effective the principle of subordination must
> be applied. This involves a dominant idea to which all else is subordinate. If
> patterns were applied indiscriminately to the quilt, the result would be chaos: a
> muddle.

These result as emergent themes, such as the ones in this study that included, the accomplished teachers' backgrounds, personal qualities, beliefs, assumptions about art, what they consider children need to know in art and other issues. The formation of categories enabled me to sort ideas and perceptions and to communicate clearly the manner in which experiences were construed. Dominant motifs stand out by their spacing and size relation to the rest of the quilt.

Thematic critique is about looking for recurring messages and qualities, isolating features and then presenting these in a narrative form as salient images and patterns that exemplify and fit the purpose of the critic and the description of the phenomenon. The themes should ideally form a "summary of the essential features" (Eisner 1998: 104). The themes emerged naturally from the research process. Eisner (1998: 104) states that:

> The formulation of themes within educational criticism means identifying the
> recurring messages that pervade the situation about which the critic writes. Themes
> are dominant features of a situation or person, those qualities of place, person, or
> object that define or describe identity.

However, there are an almost limitless number of themes that could be explored from a work. In the quilting analogy, "quilting inherently provides infinite scope for truly creative pleasure in design and execution." (Hake 1937: 19). The skill of the critic as quilter, is in foregrounding the most significant issues. A number of critics writing about a single work may come up with a multitude of different themes as conceptual organisers for the information observed and experienced. To this end, the narrative in this study represented one way of framing the information gained. This is inevitable, but it also meant that readers needed to be aware of the possibility of different interpretations that may have been possible.

6.10 Framing and multiplicity

No single comprehensive rendering can result from critical appreciative interpretation. As Barrett (1991: 9) notes, "no single interpretation is exhaustive of the meaning of an artwork and there can be different, competing, and contrasting interpretations of the same artwork." To follow the metaphor of quilting, "The most difficult part of piecing a quilt is choosing a pattern" (Hinson 1966: 65). Interpretive critique is characterised by multiplicity and the opening up of a work to alternatives. No consensus is possible as everyone who reads critical narrative confers his or her own idiosyncratic meanings to the story presented. Lather (1998: 488) argues that critical writing is not about presenting the 'right' story but rather it is about, "contradictory voices, counter-narratives and competing understandings". Multiple realities exist in the way the text is written and the meanings constructed in the mind's of the people who read the narrative and interpret it for their own context. Sherman and Lincoln (1982: 4) reason that meaning is therefore, "intangible and idiosyncratic" and exists as a shifting set of interpretations made by the various frames applied to the narrative by the researcher and the readers.

When adopting an arts-based approach to inquiry, the critical appreciative narrative that results is viewed as an 'act' rather than an object that is permanent and owned. This view of narrative implies a level of change and movement intimates the relationship between text and audience. Subsequently, by eliminating the commodification of narrative as an 'object' it avoids issues of ownership and authorship. Foucault questions issues of ownership and preciousness in critical writing when he states, "modern criticism uses methods similar to those of Christian exegesis employed when trying to prove the value of the text by its author's saintliness!" (Harrison and Wood 1992: 926)

Discourses within a narrative shift with the application of different frames. Frames act like the movement of a lens on a camera bringing in and out of focus various aspects of the writing. By moving the camera, or altering the framing of the lens, different conversations come to the foreground while others recede. Mouffe (in Nadesan and Elenes 1998: 265) describes these frames as being, "possibilities for choice and action". The strength of effective critical appreciation is that accord is not desirable. Differences are as important as similarities and multiple perspectives occur in a montaged manner, rather than being collapsed into the production of a single-layered picture. Mouffe (in Nadesan and Elenes

1998: 251) states, "It is the tension between consensus- on the values- and disensus- on their interpretation- that makes possible the agonistic dynamics of pluralistic democracy."

Framing requires selective perception that is responsive to both the subtle and the distinctive. It is a form of aesthetic and empathetic knowing that isolates aspects of a phenomenon. Eisner (1995: 5) argues that the framing of narrative, with its concern for the particular can help, "us to recognise what individual teachers do when they teach." Lincoln (1988) describes framing as a process of determining "what kinds of knowledge (the critic) thinks is important, meaningful, powerful, persuasive and socially acceptable". Framing operates reciprocally with the critic and the reader as decisions are made not only by the critic as to what is significant, but also as to what is likely to be noticed and valued by the reader. Framing is a form of transformation of the data. In critical appreciation the critic begins the framing process by assessing the data and making interpretations and determining the likely value and impact of what to include and omit. The narrative is constructed as a result of these transformations. Framing largely determines the nature and structure of the narrative and as such, any given point of view holds multiple points of focus, that ultimately determine the meaning and reading of the data and its interpretation. This view as it relates to the work of the critic is summarised by Anderson (1995: 198), when he states:

> No one view, no individual perception can encompass or apprehend its multiplicity
> of views, layers and meanings. Yet each view is valuable in and of itself. And
> each is complete and satisfying, and whole unto itself. Insight and meaning result
> not only from perception, but also from the application of intellect and emotion to
> an interpretation of what is seen. Different minds and different hearts create
> different meanings from the same physical perception.

This study was reliant upon multiple frames of interpretation and was within the bounds of postmodern critique.

6.11 Postmodern critique

A postmodern approach involves the critic reflecting on her writing and building layers of conversation, where the critic does not only comment about the artwork, but also comments about the comments about the artwork. In this way, a postmodern model of critical narrative is premised on the idea that language creates meaning, and so is not tied to discussing only the artwork, but instead analyses the conversations surrounding the

artwork. Gooding-Brown (1999) argues that the focus is on the social and historical constructions within the conversations surrounding the artwork. In relation to this study, the focus was not on the accomplished teaching per se, but rather what the teachers *say* about their lives and teaching. The critical narrative was drawn from an interpretation of these conversations and from what was partial, subjective and intuitive within the accomplished teachers' conversations.

Under a postmodern approach to criticism, authoritative stances were challenged and the accomplished teachers spoke in their own voice. Their ideas were recorded and shared. Verification was in terms of their ideas and not an imposed dominant philosophical model. This approach was sensitive to the importance of voice and multiple visions, and challenged ideas that good criticism is based on unity, totality and closure. As Denzin (1994: 511) notes, a postmodern view of critique celebrates, "uncertainty and attempts to create texts that do not impose theoretical frameworks on the world". Postmodern critique is concerned with telling small stories that exist within contexts and recognises the constitutive force of discourse and endorses people as active constructors of meaning capable of making choices in relation to the way they gain meaning and apply that meaning to their beliefs and practices. Lather (1991: 39) argues that:

> Postmodernism might be construed as a form of academic conscious-raising that can lead to a more accurate self-understanding of the ambiguity of our position as 'engaged intellectuals' concerned with using our knowledge and engagement in potent ways.

Postmodern narrative is framed around critics putting themselves in the text, and engaging in writing "as a creative act of discovery and inquiry" (Denzin 1994: 504). In this way meaning is neither wholly objective nor subjective, but rather exists as a transaction between both these ideas (Eisner 1991). Anderson (1993) argues that critical appreciative narratives are indicative of sensibility, informed sense and intuition that result from a combination of the writer's perception, interpretation and evaluation. To this extent, a postmodern critique is inherently evaluative. The critic's aim is to develop patterns of plausibility that might engender future actions, enhanced perceptions or instigate imaginings of possibilities.

6.12 Subjectivity

Lyotard (1999) writes of small narratives as being 'invented allusions to the conceivable'. This conception encompasses the way narratives are language and context dependent and contain multiple and different readings of meaning. Donmoyer (1990:119) argues that, "meanings selected will influence the researcher's findings at least as much as the experienced reality described". To make meanings is a struggle between different and often competing 'realities'. Similarly, Phillips (1990) notes that is now recognised that there is no absolutely secure starting point for knowledge; nothing is known with such certainty that all possibility of future revision is removed. All knowledge is tentative. Interpretation gains strength and richness through perspectival subjectivity.

Eisner (1998: 56) contends that researchers "strive to make their conclusions and interpretations as credible as possible within the framework they choose to use." Credibility in postmodern inquiry is linked to the way people might look at an art exhibition. A 'room full of pretty pictures' might please everyone who attends, but fail to move anyone. A 'good' exhibition is often characterised by challenging, disturbing and provoking images that confront people and make them think. People's reaction to such an exhibition is likely to vary, so consensus is not a sign of quality in relation to art. This is not to say that postmodern inquiries cannot be both high quality and inferior. Phillips (1990: 23) cautions that "we abandon the assurance that we can know when we have reached the truth (but) we do not have to abandon the view that some types of inquiries are better than others." Diligence, thoroughness and quality exist in all forms of research. Aligned to quality in postmodern research is the view that critical aesthetic inquiry has a responsibility to present views accurately, democratically and in way that does not separate the researcher or the participants as 'others' in the critical process. Denzin (1994) warns of the need for researchers to avoid the tendency of "othering" when interpreting data and presenting these in narrative. A postmodern stance abandons ideas of the critic having an authoritative stance, instead favouring notions of appreciation that encompass reflexivity, lived experiences and emotion. Such a narrative is creatively constructed in relational terms and gives consideration to situation and context. Similarly, Derrida (1987) writes of the critic needing to abandon the view that she has privileged access to meaning. Interpretation in this study existed as an act of negotiation between the accomplished

teachers, myself, the context and the history of art education. It is from these sources that the story was told and is read.

6.13 Identifying self

As a small child, my younger brother and I would nestle onto my mother's bed at night to listen to stories suggested by her old prints in the pieced quilt on her bed. Whose dress had that print been? When was it bought? Where? Who made it? How was it made, and where was it first worn?
(Hinson 1966: 185)

Critical appreciation is a responsive art, reliant upon the manner in which the critique finds familiar echoes in the hearts and minds of the reader. The reader must make the link by recognising themselves in the world as part of the discourse in constructing the image. Part of critical appreciation is the awareness of the communicative aspect of the process. As a critic the question must be asked, "For whom do we speak, and to whom do we speak, with what voice, to what end, using what criteria" (Richardson 1990: 27)?

To be able to read the artistic, the individual possesses a willingness to consider the artefact of others' existence as embodied meanings in their lives. Reading is not passive transferral. Peterson (1978) argues that to successfully read critical writing, the reader needs to have a critical appreciation of the ways in which aesthetic practice enable the individual to gain understanding of the universe, society and ourselves. Finlay and Knowles (1995:134) propose that, "there is a necessity for the audience of artistic qualitative research to be aesthetically literate in order to appreciate its qualities." While, I believe that research should be more accessible and democratically available than such a view would indicate, I concur with the idea that "No matter how compelling the art object, there can be no aesthetic experience without a willing and able beholder" (Finlay and Knowles 1995: 134). Critical aesthetic narrative must be crafted to allow a level of openendedness that encourages the reader to create figurative relations with the text. Spaces in the text permit the reader to recognise him or herself in the narrative and provide a point of connectivenss between the writing and the reader, giving an opportunity for reflection which may inspire the will to act or it may open up the criticism to evaluation and analysis.

Studying the 'other' involves studying yourself as researcher and critic. When you write for others to read, you are inherently in a two-way conversation. By entering this conversation,

you are opening yourself up to questioning and engagement. Lincoln and Guba (1988: 8) contend that, "the researcher has an obligation to be self-examining, self-questioning, self-challenging, self-critical and self correcting" and that research is an "intensely personal process on the part of the inquirer". By finding and understanding 'self' within the criticism, the critic is able to gain a greater sense of inner, perhaps spiritual, connectivenss. Cassirer (1974: 1) suggests that, "self-knowledge is the highest aim of philosophical inquiry." A postmodern view suggests that a researcher has not one true self, but rather a multiplicity of authentic voices within her. These voices guide the research process and direct the responses to the aesthetic experience of inquiry. Finlay and Knowles (1995: 130) use the analogy of a musician:

> Consider the experience of a musician. The musician interacts with the music and instrument to create art. Musicians who fail to connect with their music or instrument may at best reach a certain type of technical accomplishment but will never be true artists.

Through research you discover your voice, through listening you hear your own voice and through looking you develop a vision. The aim of the research is advancement of self and the instigation of discussion. This discussion is dependent upon the positions and spaces created within the text. As Lincoln (1986: 136) contends:

> The world in which we live is one of our own creation… the creature or creatures of our own visions, imaginations, aspirations, interactions, values, attitudes, beliefs and more importantly, the meanings and coherence we impose to keep ourselves from drowning in chaos.

Rather than hiding ourselves in the research process, Finlay and Knowles (1995: 139) argue that we must actively acknowledge and promote a sense of self and a voice for ourselves within the research process. They suggest that:

> If we acknowledge that when I am working on a personal research project I am interpreter of the various phenomena that I observe, then I am an artist. This is because I am in fact deriving meaning from that experience, and I am articulating in a particular way the experiences, as an artist might do visually or in performance or in music.

These personal perspectives are invaluable aspects of critical narrative that need to be fully revealed in the study, enabling the reader to determine the extent to which these have influenced the collection and interpretation of data. The following chapter outlines the way the methodology operates within an ethical stance.

7 A personal response to ethics

*As for the women who work, if there are children in the family, extra leisure time
should be spent with them. Sitting in a comfortable chair sewing for an hour
while the children tell of their exciting day or show off their reading skills would
not be time wasted.*
(Hinson 1966: 186)

7.1 Introduction

Ethics of research exist as a set of ideals related specifically to the paradigm in which the

research is conceived and constructed. This study was premised on the belief that research

is an opportunity, not a right. Research should be conducted in collaboration with those

likely to be impacted upon by the research. This chapter outlines the ethical issues

associated with a critical appreciative approach to research. This chapter extends upon the

formally ethical requirements associated with conducting research. This chapter should be read as existing within formal ethical requirements, but also going beyond these to consider issues more closely aligned with the positioning of participants in the study and the impact of research on self and family. Formal approval for ethical investigation is included in appendix 2.1 as evidence of the successful fulfilment of the required ethical consents.

7.2   Positioning

The teachers and the researcher were located side-by-side in this research investigation. The critical friends groups enabled the teachers to critically reflect on the conversations surrounding their practices. The critical friends group meetings were followed by a series of visits to the classrooms of the accomplished teachers where it was possible to observe tacit and negotiated learning enacted within a social context. Throughout the critical friends sessions and the classroom visits, the accomplished teachers were encouraged to participate in critical and reflective discussions of art education and their beliefs as teachers.

There was a strong commitment to fairness and openness, both to the learning of the participants and of the researcher. Regular debriefings occurred after each meeting to provide full details to the accomplished teachers and seek their feedback in relation to the research process. Additionally, the participants were fully informed and free to withdraw at any point. This involved discussing how the research would be conducted and the likely effects, both positive and negative of being involved in the research. As Christensen (1977: 278) argues, it must be considered that "participants' potential benefits be commensurate with the research demands made of him or her."

In this research, ethical issues developed as a collaborative act. The methods and nature of the study became a site for group discussion of ethical issues. The group comprised the likely participants, the researcher, colleagues of both the researcher and participants and literature on ethics pertinent to the field. By involving the participants fully in the ethics proposal, the participants, when finally consenting to being part of the research had a complete understanding of what was entailed in the research and the context in which the research was to be conducted. This high level of interactive communication meant that when the twenty-two people were approached to participate in the initial part of the study,

twenty-one of the twenty-two agreed to participate (an additional member also joined the group at the suggestion of several of the members of the group, giving a total of twenty-two participants). At this point they already felt a sense of ownership of the research. It should be cautioned though, that ultimately it remains the researcher who must take the responsibility for assuring the ethical standard of research.

The ethical correctness of the research was still decided by a group of 'expert outsiders' (see appendix 2.1) who have little knowledge of art education, art-based research, the participants or the context in which the research was conducted. This process of expert panels deciding on matters of ethics was based on the idea that people with considerable research experience can make judgements on difficult ethical dilemmas and prevent the possibility that potentially vulnerable participants may be manipulated by researchers. While in principle I support this process, it inadvertently serves to devalue the participants, who, in the case of this research, were highly capable of making informed decisions in relation to their lives.

To this end, there was a need to establish as sense of community among the researcher and the participants. This was aided by the fact that many of the teachers know me, either personally or through materials I have published. Similarly, I had previously met some of the participants in the context of our mutual interests in art and art galleries.

7.3 Community

In this type of approach, anonymity among participants was impossible and not desirable. A distinction needs to be made between the need for confidentiality in reporting and the need for openness and collegiality among participants and researcher during the research. Art-based criticism relies on conversations between the artist and their work and the critic and this is dependent upon openness, honesty and mutual respect. To begin this sort of research, it is not possible for either the participants or the researcher to maintain a level of anonymity and aloofness. On the contrary, artistic research is about entering highly personal relationships and conversing in a responsive and generous manner.

In this inquiry, while the right to privacy was paramount in the way the study was reported and pseudonyms were used to describe the participants, the right to community was key to

the data collection stage. The research community provided enormous benefit for all concerned as through this process we obtained friendship, support, a sense of satisfaction and feelings of service and collegiality. To art educators, these things are often rare and the critical friends reported feeling very isolated.

The issue of community, while providing positive personal and social benefits, can be problematic when determining the form of the research. While on one hand, there was encouragement for all participants to identify and evaluate their own voice in the resulting discussions and narrative, there was a tendency within the group to converge to a single conversation, or dominant idea. The role of the critic was to deeply engage with the artist and their work, while at the same time, being able to stand outside the text and adopt a reflective or evaluative stance. This was not always easy, as the contrast between the 'team', collective voice, and the individual voice may blur. The function of individuals within the group was as important as the functions of the group as a whole. Yet, a particularly charismatic or dominant 'artist' can alter the group dialogue. I had to be able to perceive these influences and account for them in the way the narrative was constructed.

7.4   Dilemmas of voice and presentation

Further to this idea, the critic had to face the ethical dilemma of presentation. As a critic my role is to hear many voices and see many things and then to report critically on these data. The critic captures authentic voices, but at the same time senses what is not spoken and incorporates that into the criticism. Meaning becomes a system of representation. It was ethical in aesthetic criticism, that these systems of representation were discussed collaboratively by the group and that they portrayed a fair and reasonable way to account for both individual and group experiences and serve the communicative purposes and values of the critic. I continued to be mindful of the way in which the narratives shared by the participants presented their lived experiences and actively encourage all participants to have a voice.

7.5   Exploitation or empowerment?

Artists have been exploited financially, socially and intellectually by the powerful people in society. It is important that aesthetic criticism does not become another form of exploitation of the artists. The participants must be fully acknowledged for the value of the knowledge

they exchanged as part of the research process. Research is a piece of public property, and the researcher, as much as the readers, is the consumer of this property. Too often, research is a form of production that promotes researchers and does little for the researched! Knowledge is a valuable commodity in our society. The participants were acknowledged as reward for the value they added within the research process. Peter Selz (1968: 461) describes the plight of the artist very clearly when he states, "You, worker of the soil, produce riches for the overseer and politician while you starve." I wanted to ensure that there was mutual benefit for the participants and that they did not feel exploited by the research process.

The main demand of this research was the amount of time the participants give. Initially this was about eight hours each for the critical friends, and a subsequent eight hours in visits. This figure represented the predetermined obligation placed upon each participant. During the course of the research, some of the accomplished teachers committed less time than this, while about half of the teachers gave significantly more time. Those teachers seemed to enjoy the process of participation and appeared to gladly give additional time. While this was kept to the minimum, the consultative and conversational aspects of this research involved considerable time on behalf of participants. At the outset of the study, I indicated the likely amount of time required and offered a range of ways of participating such as online, through written papers or in person. Interestingly, all but one of the participants chose the in-person meetings. I was particularly sensitive to the way the critical friends groups may impinge on family time. The school visits also encroached on the teachers' time to prepare for lessons. I was mindful in all these situations of the need to provide explicit details of the research process and to seek counsel in regards to data, balanced against any perceptions of taking up too much time, information overload, or inappropriate disclosure that may cause participants to lose interest in the study.

Ironically, rather than view the giving of time as a burden, this became one of the most positive aspects of the study. The teachers gained both intrinsic and extrinsic reward for participating in the research project, especially the face-to-face critical friends sessions. These provided social contact and collegiality for the teachers. The accomplished teachers spoke of feeling isolated in their schools, and the opportunity to gather in the pleasant surrounds of art galleries and speak about art and art education were seen as highly

rewarding experiences. The accomplished teachers enjoyed the time to sit and reflect and share stresses and concerns about their teaching with supportive colleagues. Many of the critical friends established friendships with other participants. Their attitudes changed over the course of the critical friends groups from being quite reserved and questioning their expertise to being highly supportive of one another. Interestingly, they also developed a strong form of ad hoc professional grouping. The accomplished art teachers enjoyed the afternoon teas provided and the chance to view art exhibitions, but of most value was the way that in the second and subsequent sessions they instantaneously and without tutelage, began to share resources with colleagues.

7.6   Benefits of the research

Of prime importance to the participants was the way this research was likely to directly benefit art education practices in schools. As Eisner and Peshkin (1990: 368) note the intent of critical appreciation is to "enhance what we do in our scholarly pursuits so that in turn, we can enhance the educational process." Artistic practice is about bridging the gap between art and life. Art actively fosters, stimulate and enables social change. Yet it is noted that art and criticism are inherently political acts that are conducted within a socio-political climate. As such they bridge the gap between what is individual, local and personally significant and what is general, social and culturally impacting. Trotsky (in Selz and Taylor 1968: 462) states that art must "plough the entire field in all directions." This is the case also with art-based inquiries. The difficulty is that in conducting such ploughing unwanted social changes may be exposed at the same rate as wanted changes, and the ploughing process itself may disturb and destroy a peaceful and untouched piece of earth. As criticism is a responsive form of narrative, the researcher in this paradigm has to consider the social changes revealed as a result of their ploughing. To fail to do this can result in barren land that yields no crops but is rather left open to erosion from wind and rain. Prior to entering this study I considered the likely negative social changes that could result from my work. What if the study revealed the unimportance of art teachers in the art education process? What if art teacher education was seen to be harmful and unproductive? How would such issues be ethically dealt with be the study? Would I present a clear critical analysis regardless of what social damage it may do to the participants or myself? Would I be tempted to frame the study to ensure positive social change as I perceived it would result?

One of the main social changes that occurred to both the participants and the researcher was the awakening of critical consciousness. While this was desirable it was also confronting. Being forced to think about meanings awakens challenges about the way inward thoughts were formulated and expressed. The beliefs of others held up as bastions of our working life were revealed as complex sets of multiple realities that were individually constructed. This idea was quite daunting as it forced examination of personal beliefs and the manners in which these were enacted. In this awakening the teachers and I were confronted with the recognition that values are indeed one's own while simultaneously recognising that our values are a product of a socio-cultural context and background. It was also apparent in group conversations that while values appear to be uniquely constructed they frequently reflect power and political bases. Lather (1992: 96) warns that, "awareness of the complexity, contingency and fragility of the practices we invent to discover the truth about ourselves can be paralysing." Disengagement and objectivity are not possible or desirable in art-based research as the researcher, as critic, is innately part of the research. This exposes the effects of self-awakening.

7.7   Issues of identity

This awakening can emerge as a powerful positive force or it can make the participants feel vulnerable and self-conscious. It is easy for the inquirer to become overly attentive to self-revelations. Yet it is inevitable and ethically corrects in critical inquiry that, "good criticism exposes the critic's values." (Anderson 1993: 203). Criticism is contingently influenced by the values of the inquirer. This occurred at all stages of the research, from choice of problem through to the framing and bounding of that problem. During the research, I continued to be aware of the way the experiences encountered heightened this process of self-awareness and created moments of personal and social transformation, for both the other participants and myself. I had to question my political and research standpoints and determine my ideologies, beliefs and values as balanced against those of the participants. As Mouffe (in Nadesan and Elenes 1998: 255) indicates:

> Because all identity is relational, we cannot attribute significance to some phenomena unless we can delimit it from what it is not. One's own values on parenting for example, only become clear when one distinguishes those values from those values held by others.

In this way critical research is about declaring your values and then seeing how the values of others serve to clarify and redefine your original value position. Values are neither stable nor fixed and the researcher and participants enter a dynamic relationship that impacts on all parties in the research process.

Researchers can be uncomfortable with the way critical inquiry focuses the mirror back on the values of the researcher. It is far safer to adopt the mantle of a detached researcher starring voyeuristically at the actions of others. It is far more confronting to stand naked and turn the research spotlight onto yourself, and furthermore to let the participants watch as well. This aspect of critical research is described by Finlay and Knowles (1995: 125):

> I perform you look. You watch me. I let you watch. You know that I am letting you watch. I know that you know. What I perform if it were not under the influence of your eye, would be mere doing. The difference between doing and performing is nothing at all, no thing at all, but a reciprocity of seeing and being seen.

This describes the reciprocal nature of research and the manner in which the audience's sense of being watched changes what is seen, both in us and in others. Artistically crafted research should be powerful and illuminating, but this can also be disturbing and challenging. You do not enter research with a full understanding of the consequences of the inquiry. If you knew these beforehand, the study was probably not worth conducting. Instead I approached this study with a view that the process and product of the inquiry would be a successful story and that I would feel a sense of personal, social and educational achievement. Similarly, it was hoped that the participants felt they have learnt and grown as a result of participation and that art education has progressed toward some Utopian goal of desirable possibilities for teacher education in art. This was a rocky and challenging journey, but it was hoped in the end, all involved felt that, "special mixture of fatigue and fulfilment associated with closure of an aesthetic experience" (Barone 1990: 323). This will not be a single vision or a predictable ethical journey but rather resemble more closely the painter Cassirer (1974: 42) describes:

> The painter Ludwig Richter in his memoirs tells how once when he was in Tivoli as a young man he and three friends set out to paint some landscape. They were all firmly resolved not to deviate from nature; they wished to reproduce what they had seen as accurately as possible. Nevertheless the result was four totally different pictures, as different from one another as the personalities of the artist.

In this sense, the ethics of critical aesthetic inquiry was the manner in which the personality of all involved was given the space to emerge and the way in which the resultant 'painting' reflects the values of those who painted it.

7.8   A personal reflection

There is a final and very significant point that needs to be emphasised in relation to ethical issues and research. Little consideration is given to the way research impacts upon the people connected to the researcher and the participants. I cannot assume to speak here for the other participants, so I can only talk of my situation. My father completed a Ph D when I was a teenager. He would lock himself away in his office for days and weeks completing his study. As he did this, Mum performed all the functions of running the family. My father successfully obtained his Ph D. The acknowledgments recognised the contribution of the supervisor and the 'subjects' but did not mention the family. My father remarked, as he was close to death some years later, that while he remained proud of his academic achievements he had one regret in his work. When he started his study, I was a girl, when he completed his study I was a woman. This had occurred without him noticing while he was studying. This time of transition for me was lost forever to my father.

I reflected on these words in relation to my own life and my four young children. As a woman, I do not have the luxury of being locked away in an office for hours. The Ph D was something to be fitted around cutting school lunches, checking children's homework and cooking dinner. Precious moments were grabbed whenever possible. There were times when it was incredibly hard to sit and write when I heard the children playing outside. While inquiry is a passion, like an illicit love affair, it invigorates you while at the same time leaving you emotionally and physically drained. My husband had to bear this exhaustion, irritability and obsessiveness. These aspects of research for me were the most ethically challenging, yet no texts warn of the way research changes your life. Research makes you see things in new and different ways. If you are truly passionate about your work, it will change you, and you as a changed person can be hard for those who live or work around you. Inevitably, this places pressure on personal relationships, friendships and work colleagues. People make a number of allowances to sanction you to pursue research. These issues need to be considered when weighing the ethical costs and benefits for it was these hidden costs that I felt most profoundly. Art-based research requires such obsession

and total immersion by the critic. This passion governs your thoughts, feelings and actions, and like the archetypal artist in a garret you emotionally, if not physically, remove yourself from those around you. This is an issue that needs to be considered in more depth in relation to critical aesthetic inquiry. Interestingly, my family represented my greatest supporters. When I felt tired and disheartened it was they who urged me on and ridiculed any feeling I may have that I should give up and 'get a life'. I just hope that as I am approaching death, I do not look back regretfully at moments in their lives I may have missed.

8   The research process

If ever one chances to be idle she is bidden by her mother to get on with the quilt.

(Hake 1937: 4)

8.1   Introduction

The method of research influences the sorts of knowledge that becomes evident and the meanings contained in this information. Langer (1957: 266) argues that all thinking "begins with *seeing*, not necessarily through the eye, but with some basic formulations of sense perception." The emergent design for the methodology of this study was conceived with consideration to the approaches most likely to engender the greatest insight and 'seeing'. In critical aesthetic methodologies this involved not only watching and seeing, but talking to others and listening to what they said. Eisner (1998: 82) notes that research

methodology should aim at "understanding what is going on" and use, "any source of data that can contribute to that end". The type of understanding that was revealed through the research methodology included:

a) A description of current and historical art teaching practice in New South Wales schools;

b) The accomplished teachers' conceptions, philosophies and intentions as revealed through their conversations in the four critical friends meetings;

c) The impressions of accomplished art teaching in practice in the school context;

d) The reflective conversations with the accomplished teachers during and after the data gathering stages and

e) The development of themes for improved practice in preservice art teacher education.

Methodology emerged from my background, experience and personal view on the value of particular forms of research combined with the intended purpose of enhancing practices in preservice art education. Although overviewed briefly in the introductory chapter, this chapter provides details of the data gathering methods used.

The main data collection strategy involved conducting a number of critical friends meeting groups where the accomplished art teachers conversed about significant issues and beliefs in relation to art education. These sessions provided a level of community between myself and the participants and enabled discussion of critical issues in art education. The four critical friends meetings were followed by ten individual school visits, where it was possible to observe and respond to process, practice and product as exemplified in the accomplished teachers' classroom contexts. The research methodology was loosely organised to correspond with Anderson's (1990) model of critical awareness that involves:

a) **Orientation:** including defining key concepts, establishing the mode of inquiry, description of the history and currency of issues, developing of observational methods, incorporation of knowledge grounded by research and contextual grounding.

b) **Acquaintance:** developing a sense of sensibility through exposure to high quality examples of practice and utilisation of informed observation and conversation.

c) **Development of secondary symbols**: where critical appreciation is transformed into presentational symbols, such as writing, to enable interpretation and appreciation by others.

Within this broad conceptual background, research methodology was selected and rendered to provide a depth of vision and range of reasoned viewpoints.

The research followed this basic timeline:

8.1.1 Table: Timeline

1999 **Orientation**	Commenced literature search Ethics approval Decided on research methodology Informal approaches to informants
2000 **Acquaintance** January/February	Wrote key informants
February/March	Approached teachers (both phone and written)
March April May	Conducted four critical friends sessions with 22 accomplished teachers.
June/July/August/September	Analysed data Maintained communication with teachers (email, phone and letter) Selected 10 teachers to visit
October/November/December	Visited teachers in schools
2001 **Development of secondary symbols** February, March	Continued school visits
April/May/June	Feedback to teachers Informal meetings Teachers' reflective comments
June-December	Analysis of data Writing up of findings Presentation of findings back to teachers
2002 January-March	Final thesis

8.2   Forming a community

The research methodology was premised on the belief that inquiry is a relational and collaborative undertaking that occurs most successfully in an active and reactive community engaged in the process of gaining knowledge. The development of a collaborative research community provided mutual benefits for the participants. For the accomplished teachers, they developed links with colleagues, self-reflection skills and a voice in the process of reviewing practices in preservice art education. For the researcher, I gained self-development and the knowledge to enable me to instigate preservice art education reform and strengthen the programs offered within my faculty. The methodology aimed to enhance the cooperative nature of the research through negotiation, empowerment and reciprocity. A level of reciprocity implied give and take and the negotiation of how meaning and position was defined within the research (Lather 1986). This was enacted

through a reduction in the boundary between the researcher and the researched and by negotiation of data and its interpretation. It should be noted, however, that as a critic in a critical appreciation paradigm for research the power of decision and interpretation ultimately resided with me. While the results stemmed from a collaborative a mutually cooperative framework, I decided what to include and the shape of the story told as I was invested with the power of presentation in relation to the research. It is hoped that this power was exercised with sensitivity and restraint and allowed the participants to feel valued in the research process. Furthermore, preliminary data and final narrative were given to the participants for checking of accuracy, discussion and reflection, and these reflective comments were incorporated into the final construction of the thesis.

8.3   Using informants to determine participants

To construct the community, a number of participants were critical. The participants represented accomplished art teaching practice because it was felt that teachers who had "previously received public recognition for their successes" (Flinders and Eisner 1994: 350-351) provided the most insightful view of what should be valued in art education practices. It was considered that accomplished teachers provided stimulating ideas, in much the same way as interesting art is intelligent and stimulates the senses. What can be considered 'accomplished' art teaching may mean different things to different people. There is not a single definable thing such as good art. Rather quality was derived from a fusing of personal, aesthetic and contextual interpretations. In the same way, it was not possible for one person to preselect who were 'accomplished art teachers'. To overcome this dilemma, a focus group of five informants was formed to select the possible participants. The focus group of informants did not meet with each other, as I wanted them to formulate individual and subjective judgement as to which teachers they considered to be accomplished. The five informants were a targeted population that represented the key institutions associated with primary art in New South Wales. Coincidentally they were all female, but gender was not an issue in selection, as they were chosen on the basis that they were in a position to know a number of primary art teachers and be aware of differing standards of expertise among primary art teachers. The informants included:

- A senior curriculum consultant in art education in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training;
- A regional art consultant;

- The senior education officer at the Art Gallery of New South Wales;
- The art curriculum officer at the New South Wales Association of Independent schools; and
- The art syllabus coordinator and writer for the New South Wales Board of Studies.

Each member of the informant group was sent a letter requesting them to list ten teachers who they considered as *good* art teachers working in the primary school context. The term *good* was deliberately left vague and undefined, as I wanted this to be open to interpretation by the informants, thus gathering a diverse view of notions of accomplishment in art teaching. Only one of the five informants was able to list ten *good* art teachers, the other four informants nominated between five and eight teachers. This supported the view contained in the literature that indicated a perception of there being a generally poor standard of art teaching in the primary school. Some of the informants commented specifically about the difficulty of finding *ten* good art teachers in the primary school. In this way, it could be said that the names given do not represent the 'typical' teachers, but rather, the good teachers nominated represented a group of accomplished teachers with recognised levels of expertise. It is assumed that a level of expertise provides a source of standards of accomplished practice and reveals the characteristics of meritous innovations (Lincoln and Guba 1980). The written survey of five informants provided a list of forty-nine names of *good* primary art teachers. I decided to approach each teacher who had been mentioned by at least two of the informants and ask them to participate in the research. This gave a group of twenty-two accomplished primary art teachers comprised of a mix of ages, teaching experience, school situation, gender and educational qualifications.

8.4   The critical friends

> Friendship quilts emerged in the 1930s. Each friend contributed a patch on
> which she embroidered her name. The friends then met to join the patches
> together and to quilt the patchwork.
> (Walker 1983: 68)

The critical friends group was made up of twenty-two teachers. Of these twenty-two teachers, twenty-one teachers were nominated by at least two informants as being accomplished. The other teacher was nominated by three members of the critical friends group as being an outstanding teacher worthy of inclusion in the group and was added to the group after the first meeting. The twenty-two teachers were chosen because they were deemed as *good* art teachers. The critical friends contained twenty female teachers and two male teachers that could be considered to generally represent the gender breakdown

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common among primary teachers. The critical friends were made up of eight specialist teachers and twelve generalist teachers. There was also one teacher who ran a private art school (as a specialist, but had previously taught as a generalist) and one substitute teacher who taught as both a generalist and a specialist as vacancies occurred.

The critical friends taught in a range of school situations including government, Independent and Catholic schools. Independent and Catholic schools tended to have more specialists and government schools more generalists. This distribution would equate to the sort of distribution between different educational providers that you would be likely to find generally in New South Wales schools. The following table serves to summarise the distribution of different types of teachers within the critical friends group:

8.4.1   Table: Distribution of critical friends according to gender, teaching position and school system. Critical friends total 22 accomplished teachers

Females 20						Males 2					
Generalists 9 Note: There is one substitute teacher included in this list as she teachers mainly as a generalist,			Specialists 11			Generalists 2			Specialists 0		
State	Indep	Cath	State	Indep	Cath	State	Indep	Cath	State	Indep	Cath
7	2	0	5	4	2	2	0	0	0	0	0

The following descriptions are intended to provide some insight into the participants who formed the critical friends group. They are organised under specialists and generalists, and government and independent and Catholic schools. Pseudonyms are used for all the accomplished teachers.

Government schools, generalist teachers
▪ Michelle: is a female teacher in her early forties. She is working with a fifth grade in a middle class area in the north-western suburbs of Sydney. She completed a generalist teaching degree in primary teaching and is currently doing a design certificate through art college.
▪ Hilary: teaches three days a week in a north shore state school. Her school is recognised for providing excellence in primary education and is widely used for demonstration lessons and for research based university projects. Teachers at the school are specially selected for their high ability to teach. Hilary was trained as a high school art specialist and has subsequently completed a Masters degree in art education. Hilary also runs a professional art gallery. Hilary is a female in her early fifties.
▪ Melinda: teaches at the same school as Hilary. She is a female in her late twenties and completed a preservice degree in general primary education. She is a classroom teacher on grade one. She is actively involved in professional development for art teachers.
▪ Jo: is a female teacher in her early twenties. She is a generalist teacher teaching a kindergarten class in a poor south-western suburbs, state primary school. She has completed both a generalist primary qualification and an early childhood degree.
▪ David: is a male teacher in his early twenties. He completed a general primary teaching qualification and team-teaches a kindergarten class with Jo.
▪ Sophie: completed a preservice diploma in primary education and a later certificate in art education. She is a generalist teacher in an inner city state school. She has been a specialist art teacher and also a district art consultant and has written a successful art resource book for teachers. She is a female teacher in mid-forties.

- <u>Bronwyn:</u> is currently working as a substitute teacher in the Blue Mountains, about two hours drive west of Sydney. She has a preservice diploma in primary teaching and a Bachelors degree in adult education and art education. She has also worked as a specialist literacy teacher in high school and college. She is in her early forties.
- <u>Tim:</u> is a male teacher in his late thirties. He has a preservice degree in primary education and a diploma in applied history. He has taught as a specialist art teacher for several years, but is currently teaching in a poor western suburbs state school as a sixth grade teacher.
- <u>Lyn:</u> trained as a general primary teacher before completing specialist art training. She is currently a classroom teacher on a year two class. She teaches in a primary school in the Blue Mountains, two hours drive west of Sydney. It is a small, rural school. Lyn is extensively involved in running a number of community art projects in the village where she lives. Lyn is in her mid-forties.

Independent schools, generalist teachers
- <u>Paolo:</u> Trained as a secondary teacher in French and art before returning to complete and Masters degree in primary teaching. She teaches third grade as a generalist teacher in an affluent inner city girls' independent school. Paolo is a female teacher in her late twenties.
- <u>Jill:</u> Completed her initial training in New Zealand as a specialist art teacher. She returned to study to complete a primary teaching degree and then and masters degree in art education. She is a classroom teacher on grade six, but also conducts specialist art extension classes for children with talent in art. She teachers in a co-educational independent school in a very affluent harbourside suburb.

Government schools, specialist teachers
- <u>Fiona:</u> is a female specialist art teacher working in a western suburbs school on the outskirts of Sydney. Her school is a state primary school in a working class area. Fiona teaches three days per week, all classes from kindergarten to year six. She is an exhibiting fabric artist and has also worked extensively on international children's art projects including the Australia Japanese Art Exchange and Art Express. Fiona is about thirty -five years old. She has an undergraduate Diploma in primary teaching.
- <u>Rhonda:</u> is a female specialist art teacher in her early fifties. She teaches three days a week, and works with a range of classes from Kindergarten to year six. She is one of two specialist art teachers at a southern, beachside state primary school. The children attending the school represent a range of socio-economic backgrounds and tend to be quite transient reflecting the surf culture of the area. Rhonda completed an undergraduate diploma in generalist primary teaching and returned to gain a degree specialising in art. Rhonda is a very active participant in educational programs at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and has been a regional art consultant.
- <u>Diana:</u> is a female art specialist teacher in a southern suburbs state primary school. Her school is in an affluent area and is widely known for its artwork and innovation. Diana was trained as a specialist secondary art teacher, and possess a degree in fine arts and education. She works in the school three days a week as an artist in residence, working with children from all classes. Diana is in her early fifties.
- <u>Jan:</u> is a female specialist art teacher in her late thirties who works in a north shore state school. She trained as a secondary art specialist and has taught in both primary and secondary school. She is an active member of professional organisations and is extensively involved in a range of creative arts initiatives.
- <u>Ann:</u> completed a general primary teaching preservice course specialising in infants' teaching. She returned to university to complete a secondary art education degree and then completed postgraduate qualification in psychology and art therapy. Ann is in her fifties and teaches as a specialist teacher in a state primary school in an affluent northern suburb of Sydney.

Independent schools, specialist teachers

- Marion: is a female teacher in her forties who works as an art specialist in a north shore independent girls' school. The school is very affluent and exclusive. Marion works in the middle school, teaching girls between the age of ten and thirteen years. She completed her training in South Africa, doing an undergraduate diploma then a degree in art education. She works three days per week.
- Melissa: completed a fine arts degree and then a specialist secondary art qualification. She has taught both secondary and primary school and is currently an art specialist teacher in an independent boys' school in the northern suburbs of Sydney. She teaches children aged nine to fourteen years. She is a female in her late thirties.
- Kay: trained as a generalist primary teacher, before going on to complete a graduate certificate and masters degree in art education. She is currently the art specialist teaching grades three to six in an affluent, independent boys' school in a north shore suburb of Sydney. Kay is in her mid-forties.
- Kerrie: is a female teacher in her mid-forties. She currently runs a private art school for children in Sydney's affluent northern suburbs. Prior to this she taught for six years as a generalist primary teacher and a further thirteen years as a primary art specialist. Her initial qualifications were in primary education.

Catholic schools, specialist teachers
- Vicki: is a female teacher in her early thirties. She was trained as a specialist secondary art teacher and has taught in both primary and secondary school. She currently teaches in a Catholic boys school, teaching boys in the middle school, between the ages of ten and fifteen years. She works three days per week and also works for the Art Gallery of New South Wales. She also teaches as a volunteer in the primary school where her two children attend school.
- Tracey: has an initial qualification in primary education, with subsequent postgraduate qualifications in visual and creative arts. She currently teaches art as a specialist teacher at two schools. At one school she is there three days per week and teaches grades one through to grade eight. This school is an affluent, independent girls' school. For two days per week she teaches as a specialist art teacher in an inner city Catholic school, where she teachers all primary classes. She is currently writing an art teaching book for primary art teachers and does voluntary work for the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

These twenty-two teachers were initially approached via the phone. By speaking 'in person' on the phone, a level of rapport developed. I used welcoming language and described in detail the nature of participation and encouraged the participants to envisage what their participation in the research would actually look like. I invited the teachers to ask questions and explore issues related to the research. The teachers had to feel willing, comfortable and able to work with me. Following their initial telephone approval, written approval forms and a questionnaire gathering factual information about their current teaching position, previous teaching experience and educational qualifications was sent to participants. As a result of the written approval, twenty-one, of the original twenty- two participants agreed to participate. I was surprised by the high acceptance rate, and when I questioned the teachers about this, they revealed that they were looking forward to the opportunity to meet with other art teachers and have a forum for discussion of classroom issues. They lacked opportunities for professional development and saw meeting together

as being a way to gain deeper and new understandings. One additional colleague of the original group also came to the critical friends sessions, as she was keen to participate, and considered by three members of the group as equally accomplished to those teachers selected.

8.5   Accomplished but not expert

Learning to teach is a lifelong professional activity (Eisner 1995). This statement was true in relation to the way the selected teachers regard themselves. While they felt confident in their ability to teach art, they rejected the idea that they were 'expert' or 'accomplished', instead referring to themselves as learners who try things. They argued that they do not have all the answers and often things did not work in relation to their teaching. When approached to take part in the study, the participants rejected the idea of themselves as 'accomplished art teachers', but accepted that they had an established level of efficacy. They expressed confidence in their ability to teach art and contended that the actions of accomplished art teachers made a difference in children' s art learning.

The participants selected could be considered as displaying a level of achieved expertise. During the critical friends discussions they appeared to have advanced understandings of ways of structuring children's art education. In latter observations of the teachers in action, they also displayed ingenuity, complexity and highly personalised style in the way they taught. The observations and discussions during the data gathering stage supported the informants' choices and indicated that the group could justifiably be referred to as accomplished art teachers. Yet the teachers rejected any idea of ascribed expertise and questioned why they have been selected to take part in the research. The accomplished teachers expressed the belief that good art teaching per se was a matter of preference and opinion not achieved expertise. They also held the view that an 'expert' is someone external to the classroom and that 'experts' often know very little of the realities of classroom teaching but produce documents that the teachers were expected to execute, that have little relevance to their children or teaching context. The teachers felt that they learn from their students, and hold to the view that, "every pupil is a teacher, and every teacher a pupil" (Lather 1986: 268). They speak of teaching, not as being where an expert imparts knowledge and skills, but rather as a dialogic process, where the interaction between teacher and child is seen as a mutually educative enterprise.

8.6   Rethinking expertise and ideas of accomplishment

The notion of a single expert is challenged and recast to present a synthesised multiplicity of views. Expertise only exists as it appears to the participants and the audience of the research, not as an absolute. An aesthetic view of expertise implies the teachers possessing features worthy of attention, perception and/or reflection. Certain teachers possess intrinsic features that promote reflection, critique and discussion. In this view, it is not the teacher themselves that are inherently 'expert', but rather, their level of accomplishment is given aesthetic status within a context of established institutions. The use of informants to select the accomplished teachers ensures that those teachers selected are perceived as being aesthetically valuable within New South Wales primary art education.

Connected with this view of accomplishment was the assumption that ideas of value, beauty and 'goodness' are dynamic. Aesthetic practice, and particularly what is considered, as 'great art' is open to enormous discussion, critique and dissent. Similarly, views of accomplishment are subject to change. If informants were to be asked in twelve months to choose ten accomplished art teachers they may choose ten entirely different people. Yet the value of the accomplished art teachers selected for this research was founded in the context of local traditions and reflects the values of the present, and the key values of the past that have been carried into the present. This link to physical place and conceptual context gave a level of currency and value to the selection of the accomplished teachers.

The methodology stressed the importance of individually constructed knowledge. The knowledge that was held by accomplished art teachers includes curriculum theory, history of art, developmental and educational philosophy, communication theories and techniques and understanding of the application of current art education policy. It was recognised that the accomplished art teachers have extensive domains of knowledge, and the ability to apply this in exemplary pedagogical techniques. This methodology was not concerned with expertise defined as a set of cognitive or mechanical skills (Cooke 1992). Nor does it focus on the developmental framework for expertise. While assuming that knowledge 'of that' and 'of how' are significant attributes of accomplished behaviour, this study focused on motivation, ideas and feelings relevant to expert performance (Cooke 1992). In particular, concerns associated with notions of spiritual or 'soul' expertise were valued and the

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accomplished art teachers are viewed as thinking and feeling individuals capable of subversive and critical thinking.

As critic, my position in the study is to understand the issues and develop a critique of the stories told and observations made. This study involves questioning dominant positions in several ways. Firstly, the group of accomplished teachers were not universally renowned experts with powerful vested interests. Rather they were practitioners, who do an accomplished but largely unrecognised job of art teaching within their school environment. Secondly, the group of participants were encouraged to become reflective and the critical friends sessions were structured in such a way as to question standard values and widely held and passionate beliefs. Finally, the participants were risk takers, and it soon became apparent that they openly challenged their nomination for expertise and orthodox opinions, prevailing paradigms and political and governmental structures!

The term, "expert" when used in the everyday sense is a person who knows a lot about a subject or can do tasks extremely well (Martin 1996). In art education it is more to do with personal qualities and accumulated experiences. Clahassey (1986) argues that these sets of expectations form conventions, or elements of taste that become the core of a socially constructed view of expertise. Studies on expertise (Tennant 1991; Cooke 1992; Tennant 2000) present a range of characteristics apparent in expert behaviour in positions as diverse as dairy factories and chess masters. The characteristics of expertise that are generally recognised and also in common with the accomplished art teachers, as evidenced throughout their conversations and actions in the research process, are outlined as follows (Tennant 1991; Cooke 1992; Tennant 2000):

Experts have:

a) Domain knowledge upon which their expertise is built

b) Context dependent knowledge;

c) Ability to analyse experience;

d) Keenness to learn from others;

e) Awareness of the organisational culture in the workplace;

f) Ability to quickly recognise meaningful patterns within their domain of expertise;

g) Good anticipatory skills;

h) Ability to see and represent a problem at a deep level;

i) Tendencies to be reflective and analytical of problems;

j) Strong self-monitoring skills; and

k) Awareness of errors and mistakes and the need to re-evaluate.

Most people believe it is a good thing to be an expert, or at least have some degree of expertise. As Klein (1992: 170) states, "Expertise is a key resource in any organisation, but it is usually not treated with the same care as other resources." The accomplished teachers in this study reported receiving no release from face-to-face teaching to engage in critical thinking. They felt that their ideas are not listened to and that even when people do speak to them, it rarely leads to changes or sustained impact. They bemoan limited opportunities to talk about critical issues in teaching or to read research relevant to the classroom. Yet, there existed a strong feeling within the participants that accomplished art teaching has significance to preservice art education.

The comment is often made that it would be great to be able to 'bottle' expertise in art education, particularly passionate teachers. This is at least in part true, as it is possible to identify accomplishment, isolate the aspects of this are valued, and then nurture and preserve this to be applied in the future. Klein (1992: 170) argues:

> Most organisations do not really understand how to value their own expertise, they tend to lose it. They fail to develop a workable corporate memory. The result is that they repeat errors because they fail to take advantage of the lessons learned

The challenge for this research was to bring self-constructed knowledge of the accomplished teachers to the surface and make it explicit. Often valuable knowledge that experts possess is unable to be articulated without trivialising the complexity that is inherent to expertise (Ford and Adams-Webber 1992). Gordon (1992: 114) contends that experts frequently rely on non-verbalisable types of behaviours and knowledge and that "Much of our learning and skilled behaviour is driven by a dynamic, procedural knowledge that is not verbalizable". Conversely, verbalised and actual expertise is not necessarily coexistent. For example, experts may be good at doing their job but unable to teach it to others except by task demonstration (Gordon 1992). An important issue for this research was the relationship between notions of what constitutes accomplishment and whether these can serve to inform preservice art education. One of the main limitations for using expertise research to inform education is the domain dependence of such expertise. It

appears that expertise has some elements in common from a range of domains but that many qualities are domain specific. The knowledge gained from such experts is likely to be specific and may not be transferable to different or future contexts. This point is reinforced by the work of Kvale (1995: 5) who proposes, "Professional knowledge shall function in unique, uncertain and conflictual situations of practice, which may be difficult to access through a technical knowledge based upon explicit and general rules."

Basing educational programs on the work of accomplished art teachers may be conservative, expanding the status quo, rather than forging new frontiers. It could be argued that because a set of behaviours or qualities makes an accomplished art teacher of children, these same qualities may not necessarily make for effective preservice art education. Ford (1992) argues that domain experts may have difficulty articulating their knowledge in forms that can be usefully applied to the abstraction inherent in the educative process. It may be that only experience operates to produce expertise (Tennant 1991) and any attempt to encapsulate that in an abstract education program would be unsuccessful. Conversely, it may not be true that you need to be a novice before being an expert. Informal observations of art education supports this view, with often young and relatively inexperienced teachers being 'fresher' in their approaches than experienced teachers enculturated into the use of inflexible art tasks.

Accomplishment itself may not always be a positive thing. It can often be characterised by conservatism and conformity. Similarly, notions of expertise can imply levels of elitism and power and these structures may produce negative reactions in formative learners. Schumacher (1992) writes of the danger of expert knowledge when he recounts the fable about six learned blind men and an elephant. In this fable, each blind man approaches the elephant from a different position and develops his own opinion as to the nature of the beast. One grabs the elephant's ear and thinks he has found a fan; another feels his tail and believes he has rope; another the trunk and believes it is a snake and so on.

Accomplishment may be very narrow, fragile and ephemeral. Conversely, broad expertise can be superficial and insufficient. Expertise also changes over time. It is a common saying, that today's expert is tomorrow's dinosaur! Alternatively, significant 'lost

knowledge' may not be apparent but may have a great deal of significance to the future education of teachers.

The other aspect is that it is difficult, and not desirable, to assume knowledge independent of the person who formulated it. Put simply, what works for one person will not necessarily be effective for another, and there are a whole host of personal, social and cultural reasons why this may occur. Finally, it could be argued that the critical appreciative approach adopted for this research is not the best method to reveal expertise. Analysis of the data is based on a range of personal and social influences and therefore may be based on inaccuracies and biases.

8.7   Positioning

> Finished blocks are then assembled and quilted often at a quilting where many of
> the patchmakers are present.
> (Pellman and Pellman 1984: 106)

Savage (1988: 4-5) argues that within education, at the top are the "research institutions in which advanced students and privileged practitioners make esoteric knowledge understandable only to a few initiates, which is carefully separated from the world of the mundane and commonplace." He further contends that, "elementary and secondary teachers are segregated at even lower levels in this system". The presentation of the teachers influences how the research community emerges. This view is premised on the belief that research exists within a community (Lincoln 1995). In positioning the primary art teachers as critical friends in this research process, I considered them as collaborators in the research process. The teachers were vital and equitable participants in the research process. My critique, while ultimately an individual piece of writing framed by my perceptions and presentations, was constructed from the intellectual and imaginative input of the teachers. To be successful, the teachers had to see themselves as being part of a process where their views were parallel and equal to my own, and vitally necessary to the research process. As I adopted the role of critic, I ultimately held the power of narrative and judgement, but this was premised on an inclusive model of research where the teachers and I existed as "partners in a common enterprise, an enterprise that recognises the distinctive contributions that different individuals working in different sectors of the educational enterprise are capable of making" (Eisner 1997: 262).

Furthermore, underpinning this research was the belief that all people are knowledgeable about their situations and capable of high level analysis and critique that contributes to the generation of new knowledge and plans of action for the future. May (1993: 53) notes:

> It would be foolhardy for anyone interested in curriculum development not to listen carefully to teachers: to pay close attention to what they say, do and experience: to try and understand how they interpret curriculum situated in their own practice.

Similarly, Aarons (1991: 39) articulates the relationship between 'artist' and 'critic' as being, "the critic's best friend or friends must necessarily be the artist". The teachers, as critical friends interacted with me at all levels of the research process, from initial ethical applications (see appendix 2.1 for copy of ethics approval) and proposals (see chapter seven) through to writing of results. And while the final collage presents my piecing together of the teachers' stories, the teachers responded to these stories and their views were woven through the fabric of the final quilt.

As critic, I created the final quilt, I designed the blocks that made up the patterns of the squares, and selected and arranged these into patterns. But the fabric of the teachers' stories remained unchanged and were clearly evident in the final quilt. During the process of construction, both the researcher and participants rethought their positions and adopted changing and evolving roles in the research process. For me, I am now more aware of the systematic thinking underpinning the teachers' approaches. I can see patterns more clearly and continue to develop insight into the collective heritage and wisdom within the narratives of the teachers. The stories of the accomplished art teachers contained qualities of action organised in patterns to inform imaginings of preservice art education. This was premised on the belief that qualities can be externalised from one person and transferred in a general sense to another and that a view that expertise is contained within the dialogue and practices of practitioners.

For centuries, artists have used the apprenticeship model to instil those qualities of practice and conceptual knowledge considered significant to both the past and the future of a discipline. Education of artists still relies heavily on informal forms of apprenticeship and mentoring with eminent artists (Kvale 1995).   In the artistic model of apprenticeship

training, knowledge is dispersed between individuals and the structures of the work situation (Kvale 1995). Such a model relies on guiding qualities, rather than procedural rules. As an art, teaching is an enacted pattern of loosely assembled instructional strategies and student activities that are edited and revised to make them applicable to a given context. In this way, the artistry is the skilful rendering of these in response to the children and the teaching and learning context.

Trying to analyse accomplishment into broad performance skills ignores the heart of accomplished art teaching. It is impossible to definitively identify the numerous skills an accomplished teacher may possess and define the component skills within the larger general attributes. Skills are only a part of accomplished teaching and it is problematic to relate these parts to the image we see in a whole artwork. To use an art analogy, a painter can slave a way for hours with meticulous rendering skills, and still fail to produce an artwork that is truly moving. Accomplishment can take many different forms, and exist not only in the actions of the teacher, but in the reading of these actions by the children and the researcher or audience. Accomplished teaching assumes a basic level of skill, but is further characterised by sensitive interpretations and aesthetic behaviours.

This advanced application of skills results from a level of wisdom possessed by accomplished teachers. Elliott (1989: 82) defines wisdom "as a holistic appreciation of a complex practical activity which enables a person to understand or articulate the problems (s)he confronts in realising the aims or values of the activity and to propose solutions". Wisdom is a combination of the information a person knows and the way his or her beliefs serve to enact such knowledge. Information is not fixed within the individual. The Accomplished teachers frequently questioned the nature of knowledge within their field throughout the critical friends sessions. Furthermore, information is often tacitly conveyed. For example, an effective teaching episode I saw was designed to convey information on cubist art to children, while the actual information conveyed was about challenging authority, a love of visual symbolism and an entire host of other ideas. To hear the wisdom an accomplished art teacher may possess relies on the audience having a certain propensity to determine the significance attached to that wisdom.

The artistic model of apprenticeship recognises the importance of work as a site for self-formation, education and change. Current systems of teacher education rely heavily on verbalisation of expert behaviours. This is problematic given that research indicates that practical and conceptual knowledge are parallel, but quite distinct learning systems (Gordon 1992) so much of what is significant in expert practice may not be revealed through passive verbalisation. The study of the general qualities of accomplishment and the incorporation of this in teacher education acknowledges the importance of situated learning in acquiring art education knowledge and skills. It recognises that different forms of social practices lead to distinct ways of appropriating and structuring knowledge.

In previous times, one expert could become the single mentor for the formation of one's career as an artist. However, in recent times, the pluralistic nature of postmodern society and its influence on art education practices means that a single expert cannot provide all the insight needed for successful professional formation. There is no set formula that can be followed. There can be no certainties and no absolutes. At the heart of the artistic experience is the way it moves the individual. Using an accomplishment model to inform art education could give the incorrect message that art is something wholly external that needs to be mediated by a more authoritative power. This is not the case. The ultimate expert in art eduction is the individual, for only he or she is an expert on themselves and their thoughts, feelings, social influences and actions. As Chafetz (1996: 136) states:

> Think about it for a moment: there has never been and never will be another you. Only you could have been born at that moment in time to the parents who conceived you. Only you could have undergone the countless experiences that were uniquely felt, sensed, seen, dreamed and interpreted by you. Experts make generalisations about groups and populations, but they can't describe (or even know) the specifics of you. Only you can make the choices that are right for you.

The qualities of expert art teachers can inform preservice art education, but there can be no certainties, road maps or easy answers.

8.8   Conversation: The critical friends groups

As stated earlier, a group of five informants nominated twenty-two accomplished art teachers to form a focus group known as the critical friends group. The critical friends group met for a total of four occasions, one week apart in March and April, 2000. Each critical friends meeting lasted for between two and four hours. The accomplished teachers

could choose to attend between two and four meetings. Most of the accomplished teachers came to three or four out of the four scheduled meetings. The sessions were held in art galleries and structured as discussion groups, rather than formal interviews. The critical friends groups were followed by school visits, where nine accomplished teachers from the original critical friends group were observed and engaged in further, individual conversations.

For each critical friends meeting, the teachers were placed in a context where they could feel relaxed and confident and adopted a loosely structured conversional style, allowing natural speech to emerge. Stout (1995: 176) defines conversation as being " verbal exchange of ideas and information, but what distinguishes it from other forms of verbal exchange is the ease and familiarity associated with conversation." The participants were aware that the intention of the conversations was to yield worthwhile knowledge that could be applied to reconceptualising the way preservice education is conducted in relation to art education. The conversations provided a valuable means by which philosophical issues were revealed and discussed. The conversations tended to reveal three main purposes. Firstly, they affirmed things that exist as 'givens' by both the accomplished teachers and me. Secondly, the conversations opened-up for exploration ideas new to me and quite revealing. The teachers also found these revealing, but in their case it was indicative of tacit understandings being foregrounded, and also the realisation that others in the research hold similar beliefs, which previously had been considered by the individual teacher as being highly idiosyncratic. Thirdly, the research itself became a powerful context for conversation. Through the enactment of the research process, the participants felt that a space was revealed where they could voice ideas and beliefs. For the accomplished teachers, the conversation became a goal in itself and they valued participation in a communicative and supportive social environment.

In the whole group critical friends sessions, the informal meetings both before and after the individual school-based meetings and in the individual, school-based meetings, the conversations were frank, honest and detailed. The teachers were forthcoming and relished participation in conversations about art education and collaboration with other art educators. They actively shared the conceptual, intellectual and reflective dimensions of their work. The accomplished teachers appeared to enjoy discussing deeper philosophical

underpinnings related to teaching and considered this to something they rarely have time to engage in. Hagaman (1990: 32-33) describes good conversation as "neither fight nor contest". This was true of all the conversations for this research. They displayed a high level of goodwill and mutual support. Hagaman (1990: 32-33) further states that conversation is circular in form, cooperative in manner, and constructive in intent." Once again, the teachers participated in a cooperative and supportive manner in all conversations, and reflective revisions and circuitous dialog marked the conversations. Additionally, the conversations were highly generative of information and ideas. The conversations, at all stages, became a reflective and mutually educative process for the teachers and me. In this way, the conversations characterised Hagaman's (1990: 32-33) further delineation of a good conversation as being, "an interchange of ideas by those who see themselves not as adversaries but as human beings coming together to talk and listen and learn from one another."

To enable a positive structure for the conversations to occur a number of approaches were used. For the four critical friends meetings, the teachers were placed in pleasant surroundings. The beautiful rooms at the Art Gallery of NSW and the UTS Gallery provide a wonderful backdrop in which the conversations were enacted. The art gave the meetings an air of 'specialness' that made the teachers feel valued and important. The teachers were warmly welcomed into this context and the refreshments provided assisted in building a relaxed and informal context. The teachers sat in a circle, with a coffee table of refreshments in the centre. Nametags were distributed to facilitate the conversation. The meeting started with a welcome from the gallery officer(s) and a vote of thanks from me. These served to further establish a feeling that the teachers were special and it was a privilege to have their attendance and participation. The conversations began informally with each person briefly overviewing their background and current teaching experiences. This process quickly established a level of familiarly and connection between members of the group.

To guide the conversation of the group, eight general overview topics were prepared to use as conversation starters. For the first meeting, the conversation cues originated from my reading and issues that I was personally interested in. The following general issues were covered in the first meeting:

a) Teachers' background, previous training and experiences and involvement in teaching art.

b) Perceptions of art teaching and influences on teaching practice.

c) What makes a good art lesson?

d) How do you define "art" for children?

e) Factors shaping the way you plan and teach your lessons.

f) Concerns related to art teaching.

g) Resources used to support your teaching in art.

Other information that was gathered using a written questionnaire posted to the teachers in February 2000, and received back prior to the focus group session(s) included:

• Gender

• Teaching experience

• Leadership roles within the school

• Qualifications

These topics were presented generally in a conversational manner, and topics were introduced in a responsive manner to follow the general flow of conversation coming from within the critical friends group. The conversation starters were not questions per se, but rather served as flexible and adaptable ways to instigate natural conversations. In the second and subsequent meetings the conversation cues were predominantly derived from the teachers' responses in the previous session(s). In subsequent meetings the group developed their own agenda, and the format involved me briefly recapping significant episodes or statements from the last conversation. These were formed from a written summary of the main points that had emerged from the transcription of the previous session's discussions. The teachers were given copies of this point form summary and asked to express a view on the meaning of those comments. This provided a starting focus from which the teachers decided the issues of significance and the conversations flowed from that point. Participants were also asked to bring some examples of their children's work to 'share' with the group. In the subsequent sessions teachers were encouraged to speak more about:

a) Some activities taught that are regarded as extremely useful.

b) A situation where you have experienced difficulty in your teaching.

c) Comparing a lesson with one you taught last year. How are they similar/different.

d) Views of how children learn in art.

e) Relationship with the children through an example of a lesson you have taught.

f) Images of the ideal teaching/ learning situation in art education and how can it be achieved.

g) Experiences as an art maker and art viewer.

While these topics guided the conversations, in each of the interview and meeting contexts, I adopted a role of collaborator and friend being flexible, adaptable and responding intuitively to the statements and phrases made. At all times, my demeanour was courteous and I maintained a personal conversation rhythm in response to the tone and climate within the conversation. My role was characterised by careful listening and intuitive responses. Arranging people in a social group context and encouraging them to talk gave rise to a wealth of engaging responses. I reacted to the flows in the conversation and redirected the conversation if it deviated too far from the broad topics. Eisner (1998: 183) notes that good conversations involves "listening intently and asking questions that focus on concrete examples and feelings rather than on abstract speculation, which are less likely to provide genuinely meaningful information." Largely the conversation was allowed to flow, but at times I asked questions to seek examples or to clarify ideas being presented. I found the critical friends group conversations to be highly productive. The teachers listened intently to each other's ideas and engaged in reflective and evaluative conversations. The group dynamics tended to 'take over' and I was able to 'sit back' and reflect on what was said. Fontana and Frey (1994) commend the group process as being a research method that enables flexible, rich, and stimulating responses. The group situation appeared to aid recall of ideas, and provide opportunities for elaboration and cumulation of responses.

One negative of the group conversations, as addressed in the discussion of ethics (chapter seven) was the possibility of a group culture developing that interfered with perceived freedom of individual expression. I cannot accurately assess the extent to which this occurred, but the surface appearance indicated that while there was strong group coherence, individuals felt free to disagree and challenge others' ideas. I encouraged individual responses and was aware of the possibility of "group think" (Fontana and Frey 1994) in the

group dynamics and continually prompted for diverse or idiosyncratic responses or interpretations.

8.9 Listening

Listening was an important part of the development of conversations. Yet, what that which was voiced by the teachers was only as valuable as what was heard. Denzin (1994) contends that listening requires a conscious effort to hear. In this way, hearing is a participatory act. As Eisner (1998:183) indicates, "We need to listen to what people have to say about their activities, their feelings and their lives." Listening, in a conversational sense, requires more than simply a sensual act of hearing with the ears. Similarly, Denzin (1994) argues, everyday talk is visual, theatrical, inflexive and rhetorical. I allowed for and encouraged a range of tacit and non-verbal knowledges to be revealed. Marshall (1993: 125) states that listening is an aesthetic act involving engaging critically and authentically with your own experiences as researcher in relation to the experiences of the participants. Lather (1986: 266) contends that conversations that are interactive, dialogic and responsive, require "self-disclosures on the part of the researcher". Lather (1986) suggests that this is most effectively achieved through sequential conversations that engenders collaboration and deeper engagement with research issues. Additionally, the meaning of conversations should be derived through negotiation resulting from the conversations being presented back to the participants in subsequent conversations. Both these approaches were used in the critical friends conversations and subsequent individual conversations. The critical friends sessions were audio taped and transcribed. I conducted my own transcription as the conversational nature of the recording made it difficult to transcribe unless you had been present in the conversation. Furthermore, by transcribing myself, it allowed the addition of tacit and non-verbal conversations that occurred. I noted these during the research in field notes, and these were then inserted within the transcription of texts at the correct points in the dialog (see appendix 2.2 for a sample page from a critical friends session transcription).

8.10 Enactment

Initially, I had intended that this research would involve only the series of critical friends meetings with the twenty-two accomplished teachers. However, it became apparent once the research progressed that the conversations within the critical friends meeting formed only one part of the more total picture of the teachers. As with an artwork, you can see

numerous prints of great works and read all sorts of critique of these works, but you are still moved when you experience the real work!   Similarly, I was interested to explore the congruence between what the teachers said in the critical friends meetings and our individual conversations and the situation in the real world of the classroom. I wanted to see the way these teachers converted action into practice. Elliot (1989: 85) supports the view that insight is gained into teachers' theories through their practice. He states:

> Everyday understandings of educational processes, which are embedded in educational practices… do not emerge … in specialised and differentiated disciplines of inquiry… Rather they originate in the holistic and undifferentiated theory of educational practitioners as they attempt to realise their educational values in complex and practical situations.

Within the school context, I watched teachers engaging in fundamental educational inquiry, in which they deal with practical problems and proposed workable solutions. Janesick (1982: 10) cautions, "It is not particularly helpful to isolate the experience of the artist which inspires the artefact from the artefact itself." The classroom visits assisted in the identification and analysis of the specific contextual patterns, values, beliefs, achievements and events that are features of artistic teaching practices within schools.

Savage (1988: 8) contends that, "In praxis, theory and practice are both active and together constitute two dimensions of life that is human and free… so praxis is work that includes research, practical and ethical judgements, reflection and contemplation." In this way, teachers' beliefs and theories are shaped reflexively by their experiences and interactions with the work setting, and much of this knowledge may be tacit and intuitive. May (1989: 143) further suggests that many teachers regard theory as esoteric and remote from the daily demands of their school environment and the practical decisions they have to make. While the critical friends meetings gave considerable insight into the kinds of art knowledge the accomplished teachers possessed, I was interested in how this was enacted within the workplace constraints of the classroom.

Furthermore, I felt it was significant that the teachers were involved at all levels of this process. Teachers can assume critical roles as creators, translators and brokers of scholarly knowledge. It was from this basis that I went into the schools to observe the teachers in action. This phase of the research began about six months after the conclusion of the critical friends meetings and continued for approximately three months. The gap of time

between the critical friends meetings and school observations gave the teachers time and space to reflect upon issues that had arisen in the critical friends group. I was in contact with the teachers over the break and this maintained a sense of community and connectedness between the teachers and myself.

The purpose behind the school visits was to observe individual tableaus of accomplished art education practice as a way of constructing categories and typologies of accomplished art teaching. I wanted to sense the overall physicality and presence within the school environment. In a way, it was a search for the manifestations of the artist at work. To gain access to the school situation, I obtained permission from the relevant school principals. The permission granted was premised on the notion that I was studying the teachers not the children. I tried to keep my visits to the school as unobtrusive as possible so I limited photography or any other actions that may disturb the teacher or the children. I relied on field notes and a journal as being the main way to record data (see appendix 2.3 for a sample page from the school visits journal).

I chose nine (eight women and one man) from the original twenty-two accomplished teachers to visit individually. I selected Tim, Kay, Jill, Jan, Rhonda, Michelle, Marion, Sophie and Lyn to visit based on their interesting and innovative ideas and responses during the critical friends conversations. The criteria for selection was also that these nine teachers represented the diversity apparent in primary schools and within the critical friends group. The nine teachers selected for the school visits from the critical friends group contained:

- Teachers who were males and females;
- Teachers who were teaching as generalists and specialists;
- Teachers with varying degrees of teaching resources;
- Teachers in government and non-government schools;
- Teachers teaching in single sex and co-educational schools; and
- Teachers walking in a range of infants and upper and lower primary grade levels.

Initially, eleven teachers were contacted to conduct individual school visits, including David and Jo, but David had been transferred to a new class and he and Jo were no longer

available to be visited. The distribution of the nine teachers visited is summarised in the following table:

8.10.1 Table: Distribution of teachers visited by gender, teaching position and school system

Total number of accomplished teachers in the critical friends group 22			
Teachers visited 9		Teachers not visited 13	
Females 8	Male 1		
Specialist 5	Generalist 4		
Government 6	Independent 3		

For each of the nine accomplished teachers visited teachers, I spent one day watching all aspects of their school day and talking to them about the issues raised in the critical friends groups, and encouraging them to offer other ideas. Most teachers were visited in a single day, while others had two or three shorter visits. This variation was necessary to accommodate the needs of the teachers and the schools. When visiting the teachers, my presence was informed by the work of Wolcott (1990) as I am viewing the teachers as artists, the opportunity to visit and watch them in their classes is tantamount to visiting an art exhibition.   Before going to the school, I considered my position as a critic going to see and exhibition of artworks. These musings formed the basis for the approach I adopted.

Firstly, I undertook some research on each artist/teacher's background and teaching context. I took notepad and pen to each school. I opted for field notes, as opposed to full transcription, as the complexity of the school environment meant that recording was difficult and unnatural. Furthermore, field notes enabled me to select significant examples or moments to record, and served to filter out extraneous issues. The purpose of this study was to investigate the qualities of accomplished art teachers, and so to this end, children's responses were only noted where they offered significant input to issues in accomplished art teaching, as opposed to primary art learning.

The manner in which an exhibition is approached is important and similarly applied in the context of visiting the teachers in their schools. I became a sociable part of the school environment. Meeting Principals and other staff in a positive way established a sense of

belonging in each school. Within the teacher's classroom, I was attentive and responsive to both the meta-environment and the specific. During the time with the teachers, I followed them throughout their day and made copious field notes. I also moved around the class(es) and spoke with children, parents and other staff as relevant. The teachers and I grabbed precious moments before and after school where we sat quietly and discussed in a more reflective manner the issues that had arisen in either the critical friends groups or during the course of the visits to the schools

Immediately following each day's visit, I typed up my field notes. It was vital to do this as soon as possible after the event as immediate recollection assisted in capturing many of the tacit and sensed responses to the situation. I forwarded these draft notes to the participants to determine accuracy and to also gather the teachers' reflective comments. The teachers either rang or emailed me with their responses. The accomplished teachers made very few accuracy corrections to what I had recorded. Teachers used the opportunity to read the draft as a chance for reflection. The teachers found it important to critique their original comments. By reading back their dialogue, there was an opportunity for reflection and commentary on the way the teachers had represented their ideas. Informal comments that were jotted on the side of my draft notes include, *"Did I really say that?"*[1] or *"I didn't even know I did that, but now you've written it down I realise I do that all the time!"*[2]. Teachers expressed concern that their responses were not 'academic enough'. Comments related to this included, *"I hope this is good enough for your study. It (teaching) all just comes naturally to me so I don't really think about it."*[3] For other teachers, the recording of their actions and talking became a catalyst for an enriched exchange with me. In the process of recording, the teachers reconsidered their teaching and attached greater significance to certain events within their teachers' pedagogues. For example, one teacher had not really considered assessing the children's artwork in a formal sense before. Yet, after she read her answer to the questions about assessment, she later reflected:

> *I have never really thought about assessment before. I used to think as long as the children gained something from coming to art. But after you asked that question I have been thinking about it. I am going to send a page home to the parents and see what they think. In this school, where learning is so competitive, perhaps I should be thinking about more rigorous documentation of the value of children's artwork. But then again, I don't want art to become another competition.*[4]

By allowing the teachers to revisit their ideas through draft notes the participants had the opportunity to explore presentation and disagree with any interpretation I made. It also opened-up further dialog, by presenting back to the teachers the range of multiple and contradictory positions that existed in any conversation. With the critical friends group, all participants were given a summarised copy of the transcript of all the participants, but for the individual teacher visits only the particular teacher visited received draft reports to reflect and comment upon.

The teachers established the parameters for my visit. They decided the time I would attend the school, and the lessons I would observe. I briefed the teachers that I wanted to see a day of teaching that was authentic and representative and I indicated that I did not want 'performance' teaching that was atypical according to what may normally occur. Apart from a brief orientation where I learnt more about the background of the school, the socio-economic context of the school and some background on the teacher, I deliberately did not attempt to discover further information about the day each teacher had planned.

The opportunity to observe the teachers in action revealed the relationship between the individual teachers and their conditions of existence within the school context including how teachers teach in classrooms and the correspondence between what was said in the critical friends sessions and what occurs in reality. As Galbraith (1993: 8) notes, the field of art education contains "little documentation of how subject matter is actually changed and enacted by individual teachers." In education, as in the arts, different practitioners are likely to "employ different methods in order to accomplish similar ends" (Flinders and Eisner 1994: 351). In seeing the teachers in action, I assumed that teaching operated as a variable and complex function of the ideas the teachers express. In this way, teaching practices were mutually shaped by a number of influencing factors within the teachers' contexts. Bresler (1994: 16) notes, "What is important is the process of teaching and learning, and the process can be understood by examining the contexts in which the teaching and learning takes place."

8.11 Observation

Observation of the accomplished teachers was an active and passionate activity that employed both emotions and reactions. It involved interrogating the vision from the

teacher's perspective and opening myself to an appreciation of the subtle and complex forms of performance demonstrated. Observation allowed non-verbalisable aspects of teaching to be recorded. Any art, including the art of accomplished teaching, is a visual medium. Observation provided the opportunity to ascertain a holistic picture of teaching and allowed for emotional and personal involvement. By observing the teachers in action I grasped in a practical and demonstrable manner the enactment of the complex philosophical positions the accomplished art teachers had discussed in the critical friend' group. Guba and Lincoln (1981: 193) note that:

> Observation maximises the inquirer's ability to grasp motives, concerns, interests, unconscious behaviours, customs, and the like; observation allows the inquirer to see the world as his (sic) subjects (sic) see it, to live in their time frames, to capture the phenomenon in and on its own terms, and to grasp the culture in its own natural ongoing environment; observation provides the inquirer with access to the emotional reaction of the group introspective - that is, in a real sense it permits the observer to use himself (sic) as a data source; and observation allows the observer to build our tacit knowledge, both his own and that of members of the group.

Observation of the teachers was a personalised and value-bound activity. Anderson (1993: 200) notes that "the act of viewing and what we think about what we see are all tied up with the values we hold". It was not appropriate to try and bracket out these the personal and unique aspects of the observation process. The challenge was to be aware of the way my vision determined the information gained. The eye has a natural inclination to concentrate on the centre of the field. The issue I faced in this research was how I could create a "space and a surface that conducts the eye to the outer limits of that painting" (Finlay and Knowles 1995: 123). In other words, to ensure that the observations encompassed the total picture of what was seen.

Observations are pivotal to the interpretation of actions, but vision is also highly personal and value laden. It has to be assumed in this research that if someone else made the observations or even if I had made the observations at another time, it would differ. Anderson (1999: 10) concludes, "Someone else observing the same teachers, for different reasons with a different sensibility, would have written a different narrative, but this is my story, and I'll stand by it."

8.12 Limitations and Assumptions of data collection methods

This research assumed that the accomplished teachers were able to talk about their experiences in a revealing and coherent manner and that the subjective interpretation of conversations and observations was the key to research which claims to be critical aesthetic inquiry. However, the methods used to discover knowledge may be subject to error. Phillips (1990) argues that observations are bound to theoretical frameworks and governed by the influence of the researcher's background theories or hypotheses and by hopes and desires.   This was problematic in a critical appreciative methodology. A critic may fastidiously describe every element that occurred in the observation process, but in the presentation of the critical analysis, the critic chooses only to publish those observations that promise to be the most interesting, informative and relevant to the interpretive and evaluative conclusions. Through this process, observations were changed.

Another aspect was that the internal appearance presented by the teachers may not have been a representation of a true self. Despite my assurances that I wished to witness the typical, my mere presence is atypical and alters what was seen. The teachers may have presented themselves in the way they think I want to see them.   The external appearances recorded only give an indication of the character of the teaching and an image of the teacher. Observations are not always the best method for gaining reliable and accurate meanings from a situation. Elliott (1989) warns that there is the danger that teachers may actively falsify their external persona in an attempt to produce more rationalisations for the practices on record.   As far as I could determine, the teachers in this research were honest and open in their presentation of themselves. As the teachers were positioned as experts, they felt confident in their persona and this limited the need for them to present themselves in any fashion other than what was typical of their usual behaviour.

It cannot be assumed that what was observed was the most interesting picture that could be viewed. In this research, it can be reasonably surmised that the teachers were representative of accomplishment in art teaching. They were cooperative and open and I had almost unlimited access to watch them enacting their teaching. Yet, as Galbraith (1993: 8) contends, "teaching within the school, in general, may be considered far from innovative" and certainly not all the art teaching in primary school would warrant sustained observation." To state it bluntly, it may be the case that all I was seeing is the 'best of bad

bunch'! Yet my experience of observing the teachers does not support this idea. The teachers were highly committed and very hard working individuals. They possessed immense enthusiasm and energy for teaching art, and were passionate about art education. They gave generously of their time and demonstrated reflection in relation to their teaching.

The teachers bore remarkable similarities in their actions and conversations. It could be argued that they represent a single view of accomplishment. If this is the case, it was not deliberate, as I intentionally approached highly diverse informants and the teachers appeared prior to the study to be a diverse cohort. It may be the case that the incorporation of them into a critical friends group at the commencement of the study served to pool their ideas to more closely resemble a collective position. Now, knowing the nature of the teachers and their ideas, I think that this suggestion is unlikely. They possessed a strong sense of usefulness in relation to existing dialogs, and unless they felt that the views expressed by the other teachers were effective and useful, they would have rejected them on the grounds that they lacked relevance to their context or views of art education.

Finally, it needs to be noted that both the participants and I may not be fully aware of the assumptions we bring to a process.

The following chapter describes the way in which the data were represented.

9   Presenting the teachers

Opinion appears to differ as to where the sewing should actually begin, but a majority are convinced that corners provide the best starting point, working either from foot to head or from side to side of the quilt.
(Hake 1937: 15)

9.1   Introduction

The following chapter outlines the way in which the teachers' conversations were presented. The teachers' comments from the critical friends sessions were combined with my detailed descriptions and the teachers' dialog during the school observations. The resultant themes were derived from the teachers and embedded in their values, culture and contextual conditions.   The themes were determined on the basis of both recurrence and intensity (Stokrocki 1997). The technique used to communicate the themes is a quilted narrative that includes thick description and use of the teachers' dialogue.

The top layers of fabric on a quilt are sewn to each other along common edges.
The result is a single layer of fabric.
(Pellman and Pellman 1984: 10)

The resultant critical quilt shows clear patterns while allowing for the fabric of each person's contribution to be evident. The process of collaging allows for a rich web of relationships to emerge. It became apparent during the research that despite their seemingly diverse ideas, the teachers' voices represented a number of significant and serendipitous relationships. There were common threads in relation to physical and social workplaces, intellectual and emotional character of the teachers, and background and values. The description involved recognising, deciphering and analysing the meaning of these relationships. As far as possible, the written presentation of these conversations used

based on the first-hand remarks of the participants. It was not the work of the individual teacher that was critiqued, but rather the totality of the 'exhibition' presented and what it, as a collection, says of accomplished art education practice. Tennant (2000) argues that through the exploration of different stories it was possible to open up the diversity of ways expertise can be considered.

While themes were identified, it was not possible to tell the story as pieces of unconnected fabric. Lincoln (1986) contends that multiple constructed realities are conveyed holistically, in an interrelated and contextualised fashion. The teachers' stories existed as complex, dynamic and pluralistic themes. This study was based on the axiom Lincoln (1986: 75) describes whereby:

> The nature of reality asserts that there is no single reality on which inquiry may converge, but rather there are multiple realities that are socially constructed, and that, when known more fully, tend to produce diverging inquiry.

In this way, this study is a human presentation of accomplishment, not accomplishment itself, and its purpose was to determine the basic qualities of accomplishment within art education, as general characteristics, rather than specific content knowledge.

The themes presented and the way the quilt of meaning was formed reflected my personality and judgements as critic. To this extent, where my feelings and personal reactions were relevant to the narrative being presented, I revealed these in the text. I maintained the responsibility for the way the final presentation was shaped and its content. However, through the use of wide consultation and reflection, a balance existed between the voice of the participants and my voice as critic. This research was about the artists (the teachers) and their artworks (their teaching). It was not about the critic. The research encouraged the readers to feel that they know the teachers very well, and perhaps hold some views about the critic, not vice versa. It was also recognised, that the conversations presented were snapshots in time and engaging in the research is itself a transformative process. It can be reasonably assumed that the views of both the teachers and myself are not permanently held and that if the conversations were engaged in again, we may hold altered assumptions and values.

9.2   Data representation and presentation

A good quilt designer knows that the fundamental and practical object of her
pattern is to keep three layers of material in position, giving a pleasing effect of
design without leaving large unstitched areas.
(Hake 1937: 8)

Diamond (1999: 458) argues that representation should show "how a life is lived through the participants' eye, which like the camera is always reflexive, non-linear, subjective, and filled with flashbacks, dream sequences, faces emerging, masks dropping, and new persona being adopted".   There are many alternative screens or frames through which to interrogate the data. These frames produce a multi-layered way of telling stories. The resultant collage constitutes a complex structure of ideas, which cannot be broken down into its constitutive elements "as proposition- without loss of meaning" (Elliott 1989: 84). The quilted collage, while constituted of many parts, in totality provides a single unit that engenders reflection and critical dialogue from its readers or viewers. Each swatch or sample joined together to form the collage represents some properties of the people or context of the study. Yet the pieces alone do not adequately portray the situation. Through their combination, the total quilt provides visions that enable the reader to transform the swatches into the sort of imaginings that serve their particular situation. In this way the presentation of findings exists as a combination of multiple meanings created through personal interpretation. The meaning results from the interactions of the critic (myself), the artists (the teachers) and the readers or viewers.

It is important that individual pieces should not be too small and difficult to sew,
or so large that they look clumsy and out of scale on the finished project.
(Walker 1983: 13)

The aim was to present a coherent exhibition of the qualities of accomplished art teachers that may be used to inform preservice art teacher education. To achieve this, the teachers' dialogue was presented in totality, rather than individually, as the intention was to capture the 'feel' of what the teachers were saying collectively rather than accounts identified as being specific to one person. At times though, individual vignettes were the most effective way to convey a general principle or idea. This collaging method of presenting the teachers' dialogue preserved the richness and complexity of data collected. The intention was to produce a 'vista' or pattern, rather than single cases. To make the data accessible and useful, the level of abstraction from reality was kept to a minimum. Yet by the act of

transferring what has been seen or heard to a written description, this was inherently an act of distancing and abstraction. Every system layered on top of what was said alters the dialogue. My responses to the teachers' comments were designed to foreground the intuitive significance of their conversations. This inscription took the form of thematically organised written critique of how the accomplished art teachers spoke about art education and the way they performed their job of teaching art. To make these inscriptions, I needed intimate familiarity with the data. Numerous times I revisited the transcripts of the teachers and critical friends to gain sensitivity to both the subtle and the significant within these.

I wanted to paint a vivid and complex picture of the qualities of accomplished art teachers by focusing on the micro and the macro, and remaining close to the teachers to validate the way I represented them. At the same time, I adopted a level of critical distance to enable me to adopt other points of reference. Some of the questions that premised this process included:

a) Were the themes identified likely to be significant to preservice art education?
b) What were the social implications of the judgments being made?
c) Did the presentation allow authentic interpretation by others?
d) How did my values change throughout the research process?
e) How will analysis and interpretation influence the integrity of the data?
f) Will the presentation of data engender development plans for improvement in preservice art education and ultimately the art education delivered to children?

9.3   Voice and Authorship

My writing reflected of my consciousness and experiences that emerged from my time with the accomplished teachers. As critic and author, I revealed to the audience my personality, values and beliefs. This was done through direct engagement with the dialogue of the teachers and indirect changes that occurred in my thinking as a result of the time spent in the company of these teachers. Additionally, the extensive reading I have undertaken throughout this study assisted in the relocation of consciousness to a vantage point that was concurrently within the text and removed from the direct experiences of the accomplished teachers. From this standpoint, boundaries of teachers' voice and researcher's analysis became blurred. Diamond (1999: 429) states, "distinctions between I/we/they, researcher/researched, teacher/students, teacher-educator-researcher/teacher, and

reader/writer are blurred and categories denied." A range of personally integrated and largely indistinguishable personal criteria shaped the story presented. Foucault (1976: 926) argues that the critic as author provides the basis for explaining not only the presence of certain events in a work, but also their "transformations, distortions, and diverse modifications". Davis and Harre (1992: 32) contend that the critic as author is thus, "agent (producer/director) as well as author and player, and the other participants co-author and co-produce the drama." This analogy describes the interrelated processes that result in the presentation of the qualities of the accomplished teachers in this research. Eisner (1998: 121) sees these multiple voices as being a vital aspect of the role of the critic. Furthermore, he positions the critic sequentially to the work of the artists.

> In the realm of art, critics follow artists. That is, critics do not provide the specifications artists are to fulfil; their relationship to artists is not one of architect to builder. Rather, critics are commentators, interpreters, evaluators, and at their best, educators.

As the work of the critic must inevitably follow a meaningful encounter with artworks and/or artists, the perceptions and subsequent presentation of those perceptions is coloured by the emotional import of the encounter. As Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990: 40) note, "the emotional dimension, like the perceptual lurks behind every encounter with a work of art, and if one is open to it, it can transform the experience in important ways." Certainly, the time spent with the teachers was a powerful academic and affective experience for me.

> *A friendship quilt consists of quilt patches that are distributed to friends of the recipient. Usually the planning of the quilt is done by one person who decides the number and size of the patches to make an adequate quilt.*
> *(Pellman and Pellman 1984: 106)*

The teacher's stories were collaged together, but the original voice was retained and not muffled or fully blended. Quotations were used to illustrate the themes and to form the basis for revealing the ideas expressed through the themes to the readers. As critic, I reflected upon, and provided commentary for, the teachers' stories. Both the teachers' words and my commentary were reported in the first person. The teachers were positioned simultaneously within the story, and allied, but outside, the critique. This duality of positioning allowed internal conversations (such as those between the teachers in the

critical friends sessions and the teachers and me during the school visits) and external conversations (such as the conversation between the critic and the audience and the conversation between the critic's beliefs and the emerging themes) to be reported concurrently in a layered and multi-framed manner. The purposes of the critic, the desires of the teachers, and the aims of the thesis interacted to regulate the tone and content of the stories told, and the possible interpretations. The presentation and thematic interpretation of the teachers' stories mirrored their beliefs and actions and foregrounded qualities that may enhance preservice art education.

9.4   Themes

> The evolution of designs in quilting can only be traced, of course, in imagination. To obtain warmth must undoubtedly have been the original practical practice of stitching three layers of material together, and the monotony of straight lines forming squares would soon pall for the more enterprising and emotional needlewoman.
> (Hake 1937: 6).

I did not begin with thematic coding systems and then interrogate the data to find supporting instances. Rather, the themes used to organise the data emerged from the distillation of ideas from the discussions with and observations of the teachers. Initially, I organised the data under themes, namely: personal histories; nature of present position; external involvement with the arts; and aesthetic experiences. These four themes emerged from my transcription of first critical friends meeting and proved an effective focus for discussions for the other three critical friends meetings. However, it soon became apparent that other ideas and themes existed. Things that were stated frequently and/or stated with passion and power became the themes for presenting the teachers' conversations. They were: early life experiences; beliefs about children and art; beliefs about art learning; the art room as studio; curriculum limitations; and reflections about art teaching.

Within these six themes, quotes and vignettes were combined to present a collaged vision of the qualities of accomplished teachers. Care was taken to ensure that editing did not misrepresent or change the contextual meaning behind a given utterance. This was achieved through detailed reading and re-reading of field notes and transcripts, checking for coherence and internal consistency in presentation of this thesis, and recycling sections of writing, themes and conclusions back to the participants for comment and modification. It

should be noted that while the accomplished teachers were encouraged to comment and make suggestions related to the text, the responsibility for creating the collage and presenting the conversations resided with me as critical researcher. Eisner (1998: 175) supports this position stating that "the researcher should assume responsibility for what is said, even if those studied do not concur with matters of fact or interpretation." While upholding this principle, in writing the comments of the teachers there were no apparent points of dispute and the teachers generally agreed with the presentation and interpretation of their views. This concurrence does not imply uniformity. While there was a great deal of similarity in issues raised, attention was also focused on what was idiosyncratic, eccentric or individual. The aim was to illuminate diversity rather than seek consensus and to open lines of communication to diverse voices to develop. To exemplify this approach, diametrically opposed statements and themes were presented. These provided a deeper and more interesting picture of accomplished art education practices. I did not adopt a 'majority rules' approach to present the narratives of the teachers, but rather encouraged divergence and diversity.

The stories presented complex layers of conversation. I ensured that these stories were not "stripped of their personal and pedagogical significance, context or enactment" (May 1993: 56). The stories were presented in such a way as there was continuity and clarity. The themes were presented through collaging words and paragraphs that exemplified particular feelings, experiences or concerns. One statement or quotation was included as relevant or exploratory of one or more themes. In this way, the elaborate quilt of themes was collaged together to present the qualities of the teachers. Diamonds and Mullens (1999: 101) note:

> As arts-based educators, we can cobble together as in a folio marking, our development, stories of our reading and teaching lives. This enables us a better to grasp who we are as teachers and where we are headed.

The teachers' stories and actions were projected with honesty and clarity, yet within all stories, there were multiple and embedded conversations that may be sensed and expressed by the critic or researcher, but at other times escape detection. Similarly, as Agger cautions (1991: 112) what a text may appear to say on the surface cannot be fully understood, "without reference to the concealments and contextualisation of meaning going on simultaneously to mark the texts significance." While every endeavour was made to capture the context and to open up the affective domains of the stories told and enacted,

understanding was ultimately shaped by the critic's and readers' own retelling of their experiences and their reflections on these experiences. In this way, the narrative becomes encased in the personal and social context of both the critic and the readers. This is fundamental to the aesthetic experience according to Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990: 18) who note:

> The aesthetic experience occurs when information coming from the artwork interacts with information already stored in the viewer's mind. The result of this conjunction might be a sudden expansion, recombination, or ordering of previously accumulated information.

It was the intention of this research that the narratives presented move the readers in a way that was expansive and revealing.

9.5   Exploration of issues and resultant themes

Underlying the establishment of themes was the view that art teaching is strongly influenced by the context and community within which it operates. Sullivan (1993) argues that art education is based on connections to a range of social and cultural issues and traditions and is steeped in individual and contextual variants. The term 'accomplishment' was used in this study as a pluralistic notion embedded within the interests of a particular school community or teaching context in whose interest the accomplishment serves. The teachers' theories and commitments in relation to art education existed as contingencies of their lived experiences and teaching context. There was evidence from the accomplished teachers that constraining factors played a significant role in influencing the way they enacted personal aesthetic theories and developed art learning activities for their students. In particular, time, programming structures, school executives, materials and resources and rules and regulations were significant influences which the accomplished art teachers felt acted negatively on art education. The accomplished teachers adapted practices and notions of 'ideal' art education to accommodate lack of art making and art appreciation resources in school and the lack of time available for art instruction. Their solutions were often creative and innovative and resulted in the development of hybrid practice in direct response to the limitations. Guba and Lincoln (1982: 97) argue that this process is natural and that "virtually all school practice has emerged on the basis of experience." In this sense, the restrictions served to fuel the accomplished teacher's creative store of ideas.

The purpose behind forming the themes was to present images of accomplished art teaching and to celebrate the theories, often tacitly held by the teachers, which underpinned pedagogy. The teacher's reflection was the key source of the emerging themes. The teachers reflected critically on the following six areas:

a) Technique,

b) Creativity,

c) Cultural expression,

d) Self expression,

e) Curriculum, and

f) Pedagogy.

This mirrored the work of Galbraith (1996: 97) who identifies six domains as being important elements of classroom practice, including:

a) School context,

b) Lesson planning,

c) Lesson teaching,

d) Pedagogical strategies,

e) Managing the classroom, and

f) Philosophy of education.

The following chapters explore emergent themes by presenting the collaged teachers' conversations and my critical reflection quilted together to form patterns. The themes emerged chronologically as:

- tracing the accomplished teachers early experiences;

- preservice art education;

- views about children's art learning and art teaching;

- the curriulum and syllabus;

- the room as studio; and

- reflections beyond the classroom.

These six themes have been organised in this manner as these issues have emerged as having most significance to enhancing practices in preservice art education. In nominating this particular organisation, is it acknowledged that there are multiple ways that these

themes may have been organised and that the following pattern represents only one possible quilt.

Each quilt brings us a glimpse of the person who made it, and provides a very personal link with the past. Through the colors selected, the chosen patterns and prints, the ideas used, and the care in the stitching, we know something of that person which is not communicated in any other way. We also sense the individual's values; for the workmanship and skill, as well as the artistry of the quilt, have made it an object that endures.
(Laury 1970: 8)

The first chapter in the presentation of data is called "Shoe boxes, scrap material and coloured pencils" and traces the experiences in teachers' backgrounds including the teachers' childhoods, teenage years, and university or college training, prior to them receiving an appointment as a teacher and the impact of these experiences on their ideas of art teaching. The next chapter, entitled "Conversations of passion" focuses on the manner in which the teachers interact with children and the values they hold about art. The following chapter, "Risk takers and rebels" explores the teachers' attitudes to curriculum. "The artist's studio" reveals the classroom environment created by the accomplished teachers, including how they organise resources. The final chapter in the presentation of the teachers' stories highlights their overall attitudes to growth and change and the impact of the research process on both the teachers and myself. This chapter is called, "Grabbing a coffee after school" as it refers to the meta issues that emerged through the relationships formed and the way this research extended beyond the bounds of the classroom. This title reflects the way significant issues occurred during conversations over coffee, either in the critical friends sessions or sitting in staffrooms or cafes after visits to the teacher's school. Removed from the time constraints and constant pressures of being art teachers, the accomplished teachers used these moments to share issues of importance to them as people. The title also signals that these teachers were highly committed individuals who see art as their lives as much of as their profession. This was evident in the generous way they gave of their time to serve what they called the 'art cause' and was exemplified through their support of this research and belief in the potential of this study to enhance art education. The title also reflects the many informal conversations that occurred over coffee both before and after the individual school visits.

The problem of covering a large piece of material with close stitching without blurring the main theme of the design. This difficulty can often be overcome by means of a double line round the essential motifs of the pattern, and further emphasising their importance by filling in the background with a geometrical design on a smaller scale based on curves or their intersections.

(Hake 1937: 8)

The chapters use themes and sub-themes to indicate the salient qualities apparent in the conversations and pedagogy of the accomplished art teachers. The subthemes (marked with headings and teachers' quotations within each thematised chapter) describe the main issues within a particular theme. The critical friends meetings, the individual informal conversations and the visits to schools were all sources of data. Each chapter can be considered as a large block of a quilt, comprised of the collage fabric given by the accomplished art teachers. The titles for each chapter, and each section within the chapters come from a quotation from one of the teachers. Teacher's conversations are written in Italics while my reflections or field notes are recorded in standard text (without Italics). Line spacings within the text act as lines of sewing in a quilt, making each piece of fabric apparent but ultimately holding the pieces together to create patterns. The intention is that the quilt be read as a whole. The vignettes stand as feature blocks within the quilt. In these instances, the authorship is identified and the vignettes exist surrounded by a frame within a particular stated context and serve to effectively encapsulate the feeling and ideas expressed in a collaged way in the themes and subthemes.

10 Shoeboxes, scrap material and coloured pencils

Fillers: Quilts have been dated by the newspapers, love letters, political papers, and diary pages found inside them.
(Hinson 1966: 90)

10.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the teachers' backgrounds and early life experiences and the way these have influenced the art education beliefs and practices of the accomplished art teachers. The results in this chapter originate from the four critical friends meetings and also data obtained through individual school visits. The exact source of each quotation is contained within the notes (see the end of the dissertation). Pseudonyms have been used for all the teachers and at times, the names of schools or other teaching personnel and children's names have also been changed.

10.2 *My love of art came from my background…*Teacher's background

Background and early life experiences appeared to be a significant factor influencing attitudes and practices of accomplished art teachers. The teachers' biographies appeared to determine their individual perspectives and the positions they held in relation to social, cultural and educational aspects underpinning their art education pedagogy. The background of the teachers gave insight into the source of their ideas and practices. Usher (Usher and Scott 1996: 28) contends that acknowledging background influences is a significant aspect of understanding the accomplished teacher. He feels that research participants cannot be separated from their subjectivity, history and socio-cultural location.

The teachers reflected on pivotal experiences in their childhood and early to mid teen years that influenced their love of art and desire to inculcate children with these experiences. Some teachers identify educators, either at school or college, who awakened their passion for art. For most of the accomplished teachers the notable moment involved an artistic experience, either making or appreciating art. For some teachers, this moment was the winning of an art contest, the receiving of a new set of watercolour paints or the first time they visited a gallery. Whatever the nature of the experience, each accomplished teacher described this early experience in graphic and colourful details. For many, their initial aesthetic experiences were not in galleries or art classrooms, but rather originated from nature or isolation which led them to engage in imaginative play and the construction of their own aesthetic encounters. Linked to this, the teacher, as a child or adolescent received some form of positive reinforcement or encouragement to continue their interest in art. Often this voice of encouragement existed as a lone beacon within a barren environment.

Only a small number of the teachers reported having any positive school art experience. Most did not recall doing school art at all, or if it was done, it was remembered as being overly directed, stifling and acting against encouraging the child's burgeoning interest in art. The teachers readily acknowledged the significance of their background experiences in shaping the sort of teacher they subsequently became.

> *My love of art came from my background.*[5]

10.3 *We would get string and make kites…* Childhood experiences.

Within the range of general background experiences, childhood seemed to be a crucial time for the development of aesthetic ideals. Interestingly, many of the teachers experienced quite lonely, isolated childhoods. They were often the only child, the youngest child with much older siblings, or the only girl within a family of boys. Many of the teachers grew up in remote rural areas. Generally they were not wealthy and often used their creativity to invent toys and games. As children, the accomplished teachers were creative and imaginative enjoying games of make believe. They engaged in making things in an unstructured way. While these activities would generally be described as craft, the teachers freely made kites, toys, doll's clothes and furniture from a range of found materials. This creativity was met with varying responses from parents and other adults. Some teachers reported being praised for their efforts, while others were considered to be 'messy' children who were always making a 'muddle'.

> *When I grew up there wasn't really much art. My parents were sort of very middle class. We didn't have much money to buy toys and that stuff so we made our own and I think from there… I used to get all the other kids… I was very bossy…and both my mum and dad worked and we used to have a lot of fetes and stalls and things and sell dead flowers and paper pictures and so that is my memory of art. I was always creating things. There was nothing fantastic. My brother was 8 years older than I was so he had no time for a little sister, so I would wander off into the bush and pick flowers and press them and make pictures and drawings. So that is where it started.* [6]

> *Growing up in the country, we were always encouraged to dig up clay or save the wrapping around the bread. We would get string and make kites. I can always remember making things as a child. I was always making things... Like turning a tissue box into something and doing things. But when I was about 7 or 8 someone said, "Isn't that a fantastic drawing and bought me one of those art books where it shows you how to draw, and so from that one person saying isn't that drawing wonderful, I just went berserk.* [7]

These stories were typified in Rhonda's story. Rhonda, a specialist art teacher in a beachside public school, described herself as an imaginative child. She had a poor family and was left largely to her own devices to fill her hours. While not consciously aware of her love of art at a young age, she recalled her childhood as being imaginative, creative and aesthetic.

Rhonda's story:

> *My childhood was with a very poor family and so I was very much the child who had an imaginary friend... and I would spend all my time reading and in my own world... but I had a mother who was a wonderful dancer and so I had ballet books... but my parents could never afford for me to actually do anything and so I learnt ballet from the books... so I had the ballet book and I learnt first position at the dressing table with the book and I lived in my own world fuelled by English literature. And I wanted to be like those people who did ballet and I was more... not the creative child in that I was meticulous at school and I did extravagant projects with all the artwork and that was what we did then. I remember the projects for social studies and Mum and Dad, even in primary school would say go to bed, but I would stay up to midnight (adding colouring and other arty bits) because I would think everything had to be so meticulous.* [8]

10.4 *I had a fascination with the Reeves paintboxes...* **Visual experiences.**

As young children, the accomplished teachers loved colourful and beautiful things. From an early age they responded to the beauties of nature, collecting flowers, shells, stones and seeds from the bush and beaches. They possessed an equal fascination for art materials. The teachers spoke in rapturous and descriptive tones about wonderful sets of pencils secreted in the backs of teacher's storerooms and the excitement of receiving an art book or watercolour paints as a birthday gift. These things were appreciated for their beauty alone. It was insignificant that they had some utilitarian side. They existed as shards of beauty within their otherwise colourless days.

> *I don't really remember doing any art at primary school. The only thing I can remember is in 6th class having to paint 3 views of a vase of flowers... but we had never done anything like that before or anything to lead up to that. This was the only time we had ever seen paint. We never used paint. I used to be a monitor for the teacher's storeroom which was a really exciting job and I remember I had a fascination with the Reeves paintboxes... long blue paintboxes with the tablets of paint in them. They existed in that storeroom for years... never having been opened... I used to just go in there to clean up his store and be fascinated by that (the watercolour sets) but that was really my whole experience of primary art.* [9]

> *I um didn't do any art in primary school...the only thing I can remember from primary school is stealing a box of pastels. Which I still have...I've actually got them out and I thought... I'd let the kids use them...the old Reeves ones and they are thin and they were beautiful. I don't ever actually remember doing anything*

with them... but I remember stealing this box of pastels. That is my only memory of primary art.[10]

10.5 *My sister told me that my paintings were good…* Positive reinforcement.

Positive reinforcement received as a child seemed to be an important factor in whether or not the teachers pursued art-making activities. Those children who received encouragement, particularly between the ages of approximately ten to fifteen years old actively continued to make art and show an interest in art. This was the case for most of the members of the critical friends group who recalled a time or occasion when they received praise from a trusted and respected adult and this encouraged them to continue art making. Interestingly, in only two of the cases was this person a school art teacher. For the majority of the accomplished teachers it was a family member or adult friend of the family. Positive reinforcement could be in the form of words of praise or compliments, but buying art books or art materials, or taking the child to see an exhibition were also attributed as being positive reinforcement to continue the young critical friend's involvement in art.

> *As a child I was always encouraged to sew, to paint, to make and create and I would prepare exhibitions and things. There were always lots of compliments and no criticism.[11]*

> *My sister told me that my paintings were good and she bought me the paints and I remember going off painting. And I was only about 10 years old and she said, "My year 10 students couldn't do that and I suddenly thought I was an artist and I think probably everybody can relate to that.[12]*

> *I had an Aunt who was an art teacher who was very encouraging and bought me art books and materials for my birthday. And Mum was very artistic. She used to draw and play the violin and so by the time year 5 came I was sort of set on my artistic way.[13]*

> *I achieved. I remember someone in year 8 told me I was good at art and I thought I achieved something. I can do it. I think it started with a piece of crappy pottery, and the teacher liked it and said it was good... and that was so positive... so after that I thought I can really do art and so from then on I loved art and it was incorporated into everything.[14]*

> *I had a wonderful art teacher at high school. She was really off the planet but she was really positive. And I wasn't great at art... but I really enjoyed it ... but with everyone…she was really positive and always encouraging you.[15]*

Several of the teachers in the critical friends group said they received neither positive or negative comments about their artwork when they were children, but continued to want to

make art feeling an almost innate sense to want to be creative. For other children, the positive reinforcement or stimulation to become engaged in art had not come from a person but rather from significant visual experiences that led the child to develop a love of art that they clearly recalled and described in the critical friends sessions. Paolo recalled the joy of travelling as a young child. Her time in Europe, particularly France and Italy, left her with a lasting passion for art, that she described as the start of a lifelong love affair.

> *We travelled a lot when I was young and I must say that really started my interest in art. We would spend whole days wandering around art galleries. I always remember the art history and the love of the art history and the art gallery.*[16]

Growing up on a farm in isolated rural Australia, unlike Paolo, Ann did not have the benefits of travel as a young child. Yet she had poured over the pages of an art history book her aunt had given her and longed for all the excitement she imagined awaited her in art galleries.

> *I would be begging my parents to take me places… Would you please take me to the art gallery? And um so it went from there… so my parents were musical... they weren't artistic. Dad could only sort of draw stick figures. It wasn't encouraging.*[17]

It wasn't until her early 20's that Ann actually visited a gallery and when she saw the real works, she described it as like coming face-to-face with a divine presence. She said she dragged her mother around the Art Gallery of New South Wales and refused to leave wanting to revisit favourite works and look again and again at their surfaces. She spoke of how she wanted to photograph the images with her eyes so she could hold them in her memory long after she left the gallery. Ann did not get to Europe until she was nearly 40 years old but she describes the experiences of visiting the Louvre and Uffizi with equal passion!

10.6 *You draw the line the right way…* School art experiences.

Unfortunately, for many of the accomplished art teachers, their childhood memories of art instruction consisted of domineering art teachers and stiff and uncreative art lessons. The memories of primary school art were that there was no art that they could recall or that there were occasional highly-structured, uncreative tasks. Some of the critical friends spoke of liking subjects like religion, social studies and science, because these subjects

involved projects where they could include drawings and colouring. But most of the teachers described negative and uninteresting school art experiences.

> *We had to draw these dreadful sausage shapes with those thick black crayons and you had to do these sausage shapes the way the teacher did them and they looked hideous. And so I thought if this is art, I don't want to have anything to do with it[18].*

> *You draw the line the right way… or you use the wrong colour.[19]*

While primary school was characterised as having almost no real art instruction, the teachers clearly remembered art experiences at high school. The teachers recalled feeling that high school art was going to be fun and exciting. This was true for some of the critical friends who felt inspired by their high school art experiences.

> *I had this fantastic teacher in years 10, 11 and 12 who wasn't like a teacher but more like a co-learner with me and she would say why don't you try this or go with that. She wasn't sort of telling me, just leading me.[20]*

Unfortunately for the majority of the critical friends, the high school art experiences did not satisfy their expectations as students and were in many cases worse than the very limited primary art experiences.

> *I think that is a change of attitude. I did art quite happily in primary school, but in high school you had to fit the structure of it. You did so many lessons of your art history and you did design rectilinear designs, monochromes, three figure compositions, and hours of art exams.[21]*

Art at high school was described as being too theoretical, boring and based heavily on memorising artists' names and dates.

> *Once I hit high school…art lessons... as keen as I was when I got to year 7... um art lessons were just dreadful and they were terrible and in my school in my matric year, I even failed art appreciation… which I tell people when I do staff development days ... so they will say, "It's alright for you, you can do it." But I will say I failed art ... It was because of the way it was taught... I am still hopeless on artist's names and dates…. You didn't see the painting you just had to learn off by heart artists' names and where they came from. And name and painting and know the period…. So in spite of that it's funny... I somehow in my, mind categorised that as high school art but I still had my own love of art.[22]*

The final part of this quote points to something significant that became apparent as the teachers talked of their school art experiences. Interestingly, the teachers separated negative school art experiences from what they described as the 'real' world of art. Bad teachers turned them off doing *art at school*, but they continued to have a strong interest in

art generally. A division existed between what was perceived as *school art* and what was considered *to really be art*, in the broader historical and cultural sense.

> *I do a tremendous amount of art appreciation and I often do use artworks. I don't know whether it comes from my high school teacher. She obviously had a personal love of art and appreciated art, but she couldn't transfer that to children. She couldn't stimulate and develop in children that love... She couldn't teach and um I think even though that year I failed art…It was more failing the subject... but it was funny, I felt that I was very wrongly done by and that she had been very unfair and so in my mind it actually didn't make me feel that I didn't love art, I just recognised that she wasn't a good teacher and I blamed her, I didn't blame the subject.[23]*

The teachers also described the way art was perceived as existing at the bottom of academic subjects at school. It was often only available to students who were unacademic and in what the teachers referred to as the 'dummy strand' at school.

> *When I was at high school, I wasn't allowed to do art. I loved science. But I was clever so I was put into the clever strand so I had to do languages and maths and sciences. Art was for the dummies.[24]*

> *We didn't have art in the junior school, but in high school we had an art teacher. And if you were stupid you went into art. The classes went A, B, C, and D and D were always art and domestic science. And you could do maths or art and basically that was the choices and basically there were two girls (who taught the art) and one was so weird she ate chocolate constantly and she had the weirdest style… but she went onto be very weird, and the other girl (art teacher) only drew fairies and she was a very neat worker and if you didn't fit into the style that this particular art teacher liked you had it. And I was really good at art because I managed to do the same style, as she liked as I wanted the good marks. But people who didn't fit in (to the preconceived style) they just lost out because they didn't get the marks and that is why it has made me feel that whatever you do girls, it is great.[25]*

The critical friends' perceptions of high school teachers ranged from weird to incapable! Only two of the critical friends reported having teachers who were good or 'OK' in high school. The rest of the group spoke negatively about the teaching staff and reported receiving negative comments or actions in relation to art. Yet, rather than deter them from art making, negative comments appeared to strengthen the accomplished teachers' resolve to engage in art. One accomplished teacher, Jill, had an awful high school art teacher, whom she described as being incompetent and constantly negative, giving boring, and repetitive art tasks and stifling all creativity. Jill said that this experience led her into art teaching as she felt she could not do a worse job than this lady had done!

> *I had this teacher for 4 years who used to sit out the front of the room and whistle and embroider… and I was determined that I would never ever teach art the same way she taught. As I child I used to love art and my mother used to take me to art*

exhibitions and galleries and buy me art books. I had that one really bad teacher in art so I was determined to not be like that. How she kept the job for 5 years…I wanted to go to art school, but my parents did not want it...but that one room teaching art…How she could draw a salary and supposedly be teaching art…It just really irks me that even at the time…that she was doing nothing. [26]

High school art education for many of the critical friends was boring and undertaken in a manner that was anti-art. Generally, the critical friends believed that art education should be inspiring, inducting students into the excitement of the art world and giving the child a real passion for art. Unfortunately, this rarely happened in school art. Instead, the manner in which school art eduction was conducted ran contrary to these beliefs.

Figure composition… figure composition…That was all we did. I have still got my art portfolio. All my high school years. It was all figure composition. There was nothing else. And my son is doing year 11 art now and he is doing all this exciting stuff, and I am just so envious. No we never touched a canvas… never touched a wheel…. never did photography…never did any printmaking… never did any screen printing… never did anything exciting like that.[27]

I would have my own ideas and I would have a vision of a work I was creating and what would happen? The teachers used to come and "fix it up" so it looked the way they wanted it and I used to find that really wicked and patronising and I remember standing there and thinking should I tell her she is wrong. Should I tell her that she has really stuffed my work up? And I used to find that really annoying. That structure...when it wasn't the way they wanted something.[28]

Tim described a very hostile childhood environment. Tim grew up in a poor, public housing area. His local, single-sex boys' school was an environment where rugby was of primary importance. There was nothing creative in this environment. In the rough and tumble of his high school creativity was seen as being a sign of homosexuality. Tim said he was considered tough and 'one of the boys' and he had won this acclaim through misbehaviour and fighting. But he recalled at this time, lying in bed at night and thinking that there must be more to life than this and longing for some creative outlet to take him away for the harshness of the environment in which he grew up. At this stage, he did not realise that thing would be art. It was only after meeting his future wife that he went to a gallery and described this experience as finding the thing that had been missing all his life. Tim's story:

Art wasn't available to me at the school. It just wasn't an option to experience it because my family weren't interested so in a way that is a negative experience. Someone saying you can't do it. It made me think I couldn't do art because I thought well it is not available to me so I couldn't do it. When I was at school there wasn't any art. I went to Blacktown Boys High and as you know it has quite a

reputation for producing tough blokes. I wasn't woosy or anything. I was playing rugby and sport and rumbling and all that. I didn't really try at school. My family lived in a housing commission place. It was pretty rough. But it is strange, even then I felt a sense of spirituality... I always felt different from the kids around me ... I thought there has got to be more to this life than hanging around Blackville. I then started getting into art and I thought this is so good. All the creative stuff. Now I don't know whether it is that art attracts people who think differently... who want to set themselves apart... do they feel differently... or is it that some people recognise that to get the best from kids with their art you have to isolate and celebrate difference and so they develop that persona... chicken and egg. [29]

10.7 ***The actual lecturers were artists…* College art experiences.**

General life experiences and specific experience in art impacted on the development of the future teachers and shaped the frame of reference from which the critical friends approached tertiary education. For some, the safest route was through Teachers' College, where parents felt that they would be free of the Bohemian temptations of Art College. For the people who took this route, they generally found Teachers' College a rich source of stimulation and through a range of electives they furthered their passion for art.

> *When I went to teachers college, you had to do all the subjects. I just loved art. We had 3 electives and I put down all art.* [30]

For the 'Bohemians' at Art College, it too proved to be a Pandora's box with wonderful exposure to artists and inspiring art educators.

> *My skills came mainly from the training I had at art college or art education college. I specialised in painting and drawing.* [31]

> *For me I think it came from way back in Art College where we had artists in residence. The actual lecturers were artists. And they were great... really... those 2 guys...um... they just gave us so much to work on in our art major classes and it just really encouraged us. There were 2 lecturers who had a love of art and were art educators and then they took 2 lecturers for a year who were primarily artists and those 2 guys really showed us a lot and you really learnt nothing else but art. We did art at undergrad and then followed it with another year with art as a major. I trained in New Zealand originally... so my training was slightly different... no better or worse I don't think just slightly different. So I did art history for a year.* [32]

For others, art at university was the easy option. The several of the accomplished teachers described how they originally elected to do art subjects as they thought it would be a "*bit of a bludge*" that would make academic study more bearable. However, once they had taken the art subjects they realised that they were not an easier option. The lecturers inspired the aspiring teachers and really opened their eyes to the value of art for children and in the teacher's own life.

> *As soon as I got to Teachers' College, I did art as an elective… this was because I hated maths with a passion.[33]*

Of the twenty-two members of the critical friends group, only four participants had done a first degree in fine arts. The other critical friends had graduated with an education degree, with varying levels of art training within their degree. Some participants reported almost no art training, while others experienced three or more art electives. Those with limited formal training attained their skills to teach art through speaking with people and engaging in a range of informal art training either as school inservice programs or in community or gallery conducted programs. One critical friend had obtained his art education through a process of trial and error.

> *Well I had zero formal training but I just linked things and experimented and tried things.[34]*

Only one of the critical friends, Melinda, described negative experiences with art education as part of her teacher education program. She said she had enjoyed high school art, but when she had completed art training as part of her teacher education she had encountered an eccentric art lecturer who was old and irritable, with little patience for preservice generalist teachers. Melinda described him as intimidating and she said for a period of time this experience had made her doubt her abilities in art and become hesitant in relation to art education.

> *My lecturer at uni was quite awful. There was one thing where I really cringed. He was teaching us watercolour and he um he just said this one comment and I really cringed. He said, "You were doing really great work about 10 minutes ago and that was until you wrecked it." I was just shattered. He was scary.[35]*

The level or type of formal training in fine arts or art education, while seen by each respondent as personally significant, did not appear to offer any pattern in terms of determining a teacher's level of accomplishment. One quarter of the teachers had received some specialist undergraduate art training. A further third of the teachers had completed postgraduate or other formal education in art and about one third of the teachers had received no specialist formal training in art nor completed any postgraduate study in art. There appeared to be no clear pattern of educational training or experience among the group that defined accomplishment. From my conversations with and observations of the teachers, there appeared to be no discernible skill or knowledge differential between those teachers that had received both undergraduate and postgraduate fine arts training, or

undergraduate and postgraduate education training and those critical friends who had received little fine arts and/or education training. To that extent, it was surmised that the tertiary educational experiences were perhaps less significant than other experiences which seem to be more characteristically held by the group, such as childhood imaginative play and meaningful encounters with artworks.

10.8 *I just love looking at pictures* … Viewers not makers.

The results obtained from the critical friends tended to contradict earlier studies (Waters 1999) that present a view that accomplished art teachers are generally actively engaged in the art making process. Waters (1999: 8) study indicates that there was a strong feeling amongst the group of Australian teachers and art educators that he interviewed that being a practicing artist gave art teachers a fuller understanding of the art making process. While aimed at secondary teachers, his study indicates that it is through art making that teachers gain the experiences of art that can then be passed onto their students. However, this did not seem to be evident in the critical friends. Of the twenty-two members of the critical friends group, only one teacher, Fiona, described herself as an active art maker. She teaches art three days a week and produces landscapes from mixed media and fibre on the other days. She exhibits these works and considers herself to be an artist. Five of the other teachers said they sometimes make art, but it is for their own interest or to develop skills to enhance their teaching. The rest of the teachers do not actively make art outside the general making engagement as part of their art teaching role. Conversely, all members of the critical friends group described themselves as avid art gallery visitors. They go on average once a week to a gallery and attend all types of exhibitions including major shows at leading national and state galleries through to small private showings at local and regional galleries.

> *I go to exhibitions all the time...*[36]

> *I always get to the major exhibitions and people send me invitations to smaller shows and I get to as many of them as I can…I don't get to as many as I would like.*[37]

> *I just love looking at pictures. I find I am not an artist. I am not very good at art myself.*[38]

Furthermore, the majority of critical friends expressed a view that being able to make art was almost irrelevant to the process of being able to teach art. There appeared on the

surface to be a slight contradiction of views expressed by the critical friends. In later questions related to teacher education and what needed to be included the critical friends expressed a strong desire for practical skills training for trainee art teachers. It was felt that art is fundamentally a practice-based discipline and that prospective teachers need to possess a level of competency in practical art making skills. While some level of skill competency, and the ability to organise and demonstrate practical aspects of the art making process for children was seen as being desirable, this level of skill was quite distinct from higher level skills that may be required to practice as an artist. It was the latter that was seen as unnecessary to being an accomplished art teachers. Some of the critical friends even felt that a high level of personal art making skill was detrimental to being an accomplished teacher. It was considered that if you were too good you lose touch with where children are placed with their art making and appear daunting in the pupils' eyes. The accomplished teachers saw themselves as co-learners alongside the children and developed their art making skills through their teaching.

> *Compared to the skills of drawing of some children… I am not showing them my stuff! I put it away! What I am saying that as a teacher with a great interest in art... you don't have to be an expert yourself... you don't have to be a brilliant artist to encourage those young budding artist out there and I think that is a very significant point.[39]*

> *There are very few published writers out there but we can all write. I don't do anything (art making) important... though I am aiming to. I do demonstrate for the kids. I really enjoy demonstrating.[40]*

> *I will work on my own work while the children work... if I can … sometimes. And the kids love it.[41]*

10.9 *God what an image...I need a photo of this and it was just perfect*… Visionary people.

The accomplished teachers perceived themselves to be a group of people who see things differently from others. They felt that in their daily life, they look for beauty, pattern and an aesthetic and visual dimension. Venable (1998) writes of the manner in which artistic people see things differently. He sees visual experiences as being both personal and significant. Venable (1998: 7) claims that visionary encounters are influenced by the entirety of past visual experiences and the totality of human experience as well. The accomplished teachers commented that they pay attention to certain aesthetic properties and artistic features intrinsically apparent within everyday places and things. This idea appeared in the descriptions presented by all the accomplished art teachers and they

realised the way they perceive the world was fundamentally different to how others might see it.

> *I don't know when it happened, but I find that when I go out with some of my friends who aren't arty. Well when I look at something, my imagination sort of takes off and I can see something completely different from how other people see it (Someone says from the group, "we all do it").* [42]

> *It is that sense of order and beauty. Yes you look at a cloud and you say can you see that little dinosaur? Or when I drive up to work… I am supposed to be looking ahead but there is this wonderful cliff face and I just look at the colours and think isn't that beautiful and I think how many people are driving up the Spit and never even look at those rocks and the colours and I don't know.* [43]

> *I was driving to work this morning and I just wanted to stop with the camera. There were 4 or 5 workers sitting together on tubs outside the framework with this orange timber and they were wearing red T-shirts and I just thought… God what an image…I need a photo of this and it was just perfect. The house was exactly symmetrical and these guys were just there with their coffee cups and it was just perfect composition. I have noticed even here… the way the chairs are arranged.* [44]

> *I don't see myself as a creative person. I see myself as an appreciator of beauty and I am artistic in that I can produce beautiful things. Beauty needs to be defined in a broader sense. Perhaps it is not so much about beauty as a fascination with the visual.* [45]

The accomplished art teachers appeared to exhibit a heightened sense of visual awareness. They felt that this was an innate characteristic but the ability to see beauty was something that could be developed in children. This view was present in Bronwyn's story.

Bronwyn's story

> *I think it is a set personality type. I was visiting in the Blue Mountains and looking from the lookout and seeing the beautiful merging colours, and just seeing this big haze. And I used to stare at clouds and I still stare at clouds (Other participants agree and say they also stare at clouds) It was dreadful when I was a child because I was always 100 miles away. And I still see assembly as pure mediation time when my mind wanders every where. But I remember I was with a group of friends and one of the guys said to me, "isn't that geological composition amazing" and went into all the geological stuff and I didn't understand any of it and it really brought home things to me and I stopped and thought all I am seeing is colour and it is such a different world. I just went on a year 3 camp and I took the kids on a bush walk and we made all the kids stop and teach them to stop... stop and look how beautiful…stop…I think we can open up the door so the next time they might stop…it is real encouragement but I was just saying that innately…I think kids are born like it. There is sort of a set personality type.* [46]

It appeared that the critical friends possessed a heightened sense of visual awareness that had resulted from significant positive art experiences as a child and encounters with art in

adolescence and adulthood. Of particular significance to the individual, although not evident collectively, appeared to be the quality of training received during preservice teacher education. All the accomplished teachers were avid gallery goers and enjoyed looking at visual arts of all types. It appeared to be less significant that the teachers were skilled at art making or practising artists. Yet, it appeared that an ability to engage in art making as learners alongside the children were important qualities possessed by accomplished art teachers.

The following chapter examines the physical context in which the accomplished teachers teach. It is titled 'The Art Studio' to reflect the way the teachers use this term to describe their classrooms and subsequently position the children as artists.

11 The artist's studio

Because these quilts were not designed to be art objects, they become more interesting if they are not removed from the context in which they were constructed.
(Pellman and Pellman 1984: 9)

11.1 Introduction:

This chapter presents images of the schools and classrooms visited and vicarious understandings of the context in which the teachers are enacting their tacit theories of art education. The findings reported in this chapter come mainly from observations taken while visiting the individual teacher's school. Other comments related to this theme arose during the critical friends discussions.

11.2 *The art room is quite small and crowded, but is very well organised, with labelled containers on labelled shelves … Teaching context*

The teachers visited characterised the diversity of teachers and teaching situations you would find in New South Wales' schools. The teachers represent both specialists and generalists from a range of backgrounds as exemplified through the initial critical friends meeting.

Teachers' introductions at the initial critical friends group

> *I work in a primary school and I am a class teacher. I also do a talented art workshop with years 4,5 and 6 and for this I take about 60 children a week. I have also written some stuff for the Board (Board of Studies, NSW).*[47]
>
> *I am a classroom teacher at an inner city state school. I teach year 6 but I also take year one once a week for art. I enjoy art very much and last year I worked as a consultant for 2 terms.*[48]
>
> *I teach at a private boys' school and I am a specialist art teacher so I work 0.5 of a week and I teach 11 classes, 3-6 and I have an art room which is good and generalist teachers and others can bring their kids down there.*[49]
>
> *I am a specialist art teacher between 2 schools, a small independent Catholic School and private girls' school.*[50]
>
> *I teach at Shalvey, which is a Mount Druitt school. I have been doing specialist art teaching for about 2 years. I have my own art room, I do that 3 days a week and I enjoy the seniors. On the other 2 days I was lucky enough last year to get involved in Operation Art* (which is an art exhibition conducted in conjunction with the Art Gallery of NSW, NSW Department of Education and Training and the Children's Hospital.) [51]
>
> *I teach in a North Shore primary school as a specialist art teacher. I have a large art room, which is great.* [52]

> *I am a casual teacher and I love art so whenever I can I do art when I go into a school.[53]*
>
> *I am a classroom teacher. I have only been at this school since the beginning of the year* (2000)*. Before that I was a specialist art teacher for years 2-6.[54]*
>
> *I am from Hassall Point Public School and I teach kindergarten.[55]*
>
> *I am also from Hassall Point and I also teach Kindergarten. We are both class room teachers who love teaching art.[56]*

At one extreme, teachers worked in well-equipped art rooms in affluent Independent schools. These were suburban schools that were generally well-resourced.

My diary entry as I arrive at Jill's school

> *I arrive at the school. It is a private school in a leafy and affluent Harbourside suburb of Sydney. It is lunchtime and the children of wealthy families are running around in their school uniforms. The day is warm and sunny and the light sea air whisks fragile white clouds across a blue sky. The teacher is sitting in her classroom. The room is surprisingly small and old. It looks in need of a good paint. I am informed that the building is due for renovation.[57]*

By contrast, I visited classrooms in poor outer western suburbs state schools in low socio-economic areas. Several of these schools received additional funding from the commonwealth government under the Disadvantaged Schools Program, aimed at redressing imbalances in funding within schools. The schools visited include those in metropolitan and semi-rural areas and ranged from schools with over 500 students to small schools with less than 150 students. Liz's school is an example of the smaller semi-rural schools visited.

My diary entry arriving at Liz's school

> *The school is set in the Blue Mountains about a 2 1/2 hour drive west of Sydney. It is a picturesque area that used to be semi-rural. It is now quite suburban and has in recent years become an alternative place to live for lower income and single parent families as housing is more affordable here than in Sydney.[58]*

The teachers' classrooms ranged from well-equipped purpose-built art studios to crowded temporary spaces. The specialist teachers generally had a teaching space they called the art studio, while the generalists usually teach art within the same classroom environment as they teach for the rest of the day. Rhonda is a specialist teacher in an inner city, beachside suburb. She works in a school hall that is also used (often concurrently) as a school band practice room and multi-purpose space.

My diary entry as I arrived to visit Rhonda

> I arrive at Rhonda's classroom. It is in an old school building. The art classroom is the old infants' hall. It is a drab room, but made brighter with an abundance of art posters and samples of children's artwork. There is a large display at the back of the room of portraits from both artists and the children.[59]
>
> *I used to have my own art room, but because our numbers have gone up from 13 to 17 classes now. I lost my art room but I now work in the primary hall that I share with the band teacher.[60]*

Conversely, Kay's school is an affluent, independent boys' school with a well-equipped and purpose built art studio.

My diary entry about Kay's art room

> We are sitting in a purpose built art room. It is large, airy and very well equipped. It has abundant light, great sinks and purpose built storage areas. There is space for display, and a separate office and storeroom for the teacher. The room is filled with art books and displays of a range of ethnic objects related to the themes being undertaken. The art displayed is from a range of styles and cultures, but all relate to the theme. There are also other beautiful collected objects that have been gathered and arranged in an artistic style in the room. Kay has amassed these objects from a range of sources. There are abundant art posters and art quotes on display and a range of interesting and varied ethnic objects related to the current themes. There are shelves holding work in progress neatly arranged into class lots. There are finished works and an interesting installation displayed in the room. A pictorial art history presentation covers one side of the room. The overall atmosphere is one of attractiveness and organisation. The room is labelled and referred to as the, "art studio".[61]

Despite the financial status of the school or the physical size and resourcing of the art room, all the rooms visited were attractively decorated with an abundance of artistic resources and stimulus items. The rooms had a feeling of energy and were dynamic places filled with noise, children and art prints. The teachers called their rooms *'art studios'*, even when this title is only bestowed for the duration of a 50-minute art lesson! The extent to which the teachers went to ensure that the classroom was a positive learning space was typified in my description of Jan's teaching context.

My description of Jan's classroom.

> Jan is an art specialist teacher in a Sydney North Shore Public School. Despite its North Shore location, the majority of children at this school live in high-density housing. They are multicultural and represent and range of socio-economic backgrounds. The art room is quite small and crowded, but is well organised, with labelled containers on labelled shelves. There are attractive large canvas paintings completed by groups of children and representing the various 'isms' of art, such as expressionism, surrealism, cubism etc. There are also large notice boards dedicated to displays of current exhibitions at leading Sydney galleries. Another large

display covering the back of the room is dealing with various printmaking techniques.

The room is literally packed with well-presented and interesting visual displays, composed and organised to explore a particular concept. There are lovely 3D montages and installations set into boxes mounted on the wall. The desks are large worktables clustered into 3 groups and surrounded with stools. In the corner of the room there is a low coffee table with 'comfy' chairs around it. On the table are collections of art books available to the children for browsing. Next to this table, is a bookcase packed with photo albums that contain hundreds of photos of previous children's work and displays around the school. Jan tells me she is excited now she has a digital camera and can take even more photos.[62]

11.3 *I would just love a tap…* Classroom as studio

While it was apparent that whatever the physical context in which the teachers have to teach, the teachers made the best of that environment. However, the teachers felt that physical facilities directly influenced the quality of art instruction. The accomplished teachers considered that they could teach art in any environment but that, for generalist teachers the lack of adequate resources acted as a deterrent for teachers to start teaching art.

> *I think it is important for schools to have an area where they can do art.* [63]

> *If teachers are reluctant to do art and don't really feel confident and then practical problems are thrown in it is enough to make teachers not teach art. A lot of teachers just stop teaching art.*[64]

In particular, the accomplished teachers felt that all rooms should be adequately equipped with access to water, and sufficient room to create larger works and to store and display these works. These were high priorities on the list of things that the teachers said would be the most useful resources in their teaching. The manner in which the teachers' responses emphasised physical resources points to the significance of this, as the question asked could have elicited answers in relation to curriculum, training, financial or other resources. The critical friends responses to the question, "what would you like to have to assist your teaching?"

> *Water and space to hang things.*[65]
>
> *I would like a really big room with a wet area and I would just love a tap* (everyone joins in with nods and laughs at this suggestion!) *I would like a tap and a laminator and I would like 3 pottery wheels over there and just be able to have unlimited resources.*[66]
>
> *I would like a sink in the room*[67]
>
> *More storage space.*[68]

I would like my own art room. I have to share with the other art teachers and there are 4 of us and 3 art rooms. So we are rostered on for a rotating timetable. I have to go back to a classroom that isn't always available so we wander around the school looking for a space. I would really like my own art room so that I could set up and not have to pack up again. I would like a good display space, because at the end of the lesson I have to take things down and go again. You've got to have a sink and I would love 2 hours with them instead of 50 minutes. I would also like the children to have a couple of easels because actually working with easels is totally different from working on a desk. I guess it is the natural way to paint. Using the whole arm to get the freedom and the confidence.[69]

I have some kids packed in like sardines and then kindy who can't even reach the desks. We had health and safety in and they were talking about sitting in the right sized chair and I burst out laughing and said you should see my art room.[70]

Think of all that money we have wasted on inservices. If we had just piled it into sinks and pulled up all the carpets![71]

It is good just to have a budget to be able to buy extra things, as you need them.[72]

11.4 *You must really look after the things that you are given in the art room…*
Managing resources.

The teachers saw managing resources as one of the key aspects of being a successful art teacher. The accomplished teachers spoke about spending many years learning how to manage the safety and usage aspects of art resources. The accomplished teachers felt poor resource management acted as a deterrent to generalist teachers as the skills involved in managing an art studio were considerable.

> *It is learning to manage resources and classes. I don't know whether you can teach that or whether that is just something that everyone has to learn to do it. But teachers (with art) have to either take the challenge and do it or back away from it (teaching art). That is the hurdle everyone has to get over when you start. Whether there are things that you can do to make it easier.[73]*

Furthermore, the complexity of managing studio resources was compounded by a lack of funding to art and the feeling among many of the critical friends group that they had to battle for scarce resources. The teachers used a range of strategies to obtain enough resources to adequately teach. Many of the teachers I observed spent considerable amounts of their money buying books and other resources for the children to use in their art making. Jill's story is typical.

Jill's story

> *I have to do a lot of jumping up and down and still I don't get any materials. I find I have to get things in whichever way I can. I am usually quite organised but this year... I don't know, I have just had to hit the ground running.* [74]
>
> There are insufficient containers in the room. Jill complains that she has no materials and no budget for art things. The room has almost no storage or display space. There is no water supply. Jill is a year 5 classroom teacher and although she runs 3 art extension classes and the drawing club, her room is a small and ill-equipped space. Despite Jill's moans about this, she has an attitude of resilience. [75]

The accomplished teachers held the view that the classroom becomes transformed into a studio for art lessons. The children are artists and it is their job to maintain the art room. The children are taught to care for the art studio. They set out materials, clean-up and organise the space. The accomplished art teachers did not prepare materials for the children, but rather made the space child-friendly with signs, labels and containers positioned in an easily accessible manner. The children were encouraged to collect their art making resources and at the end of the lesson, put away materials and tidy the space. The teachers trained the children in care of materials and the art studio and, in all the classes I observed, the children used the art space in a dignified and professional manner and behaved sensibly, caring appropriately for the materials. The way children were trained to do this was evident in Rhonda's lesson where her four and five year old students were taught the safety and care aspects related to the art room. These instructions were incorporated as part of the general activity being conducted in the makeshift art studio. When a safety issue occurred, Rhonda stopped all the children and spoke to them in a firm but friendly manner that served to emphasise the importance of what Rhonda was saying. The children listened carefully and followed the advice given.

Rhonda's instructions

> *Help yourselves to scissors. You know where they are kept. Don't forget that you must carry the scissors like this. (Rhonda demonstrates) We have a lot of fun in the art room but safety things are very, very important. The other safety things are that we never ever throw things around the art room. It could hit someone in the eye or it could fall onto the ground and someone might slip on it. You must really look after the things that you are given in the art room. These are really lovely materials, but if you are silly with them Mrs B will say no more nice things to use.* [76]

11.5 *I'm a total drama queen!!...* Drama.

Many of the accomplished teachers observed involved drama and literature in their study of art. Music seemed to be an important aspect of art making with every room I visited having a CD player, tape or other source of music that played as the children worked. The

art teachers' musical tastes were quite eclectic ranging from classical music through to the latest hip pop and rap songs. Music was thought to assist the art making process and foster a positive learning atmosphere.

> *Music is playing and Jan is dancing around the room with one of the boys. The room has a CD player and shelves of novels.* [77]

Jan also liked to dress up in clothes that echo the art theme she was completing. She had an extensive range of what she called *'art clothes'* that she wore to inspire the children's art making. She said that since she started dressing up, the children really noticed and will say, *'that is a Picasso shirt'* or *'that pattern is from a block print'*.

> Jan is racing around madly when I arrive. She is an extremely energetic woman in her mid-40's. She is wearing a bright yellow dress with a sash waist and a large Japanese art brooch. She explains that the children are looking at Japanese art and that she always likes to dress to suit the theme. She describes another theme on another day. *We took a different tangent and looked at Andy Warhol's work and I wore a T-shirt that day. I tend to dress up a fair bit. A Japanese kimono or whatever. We were painting Japanese ladies, my riding boots one day.. so you bring a little drama into it.. I'm a total drama queen!! Oh…. Surrealism now (she changes into a 'surreal' designed jacket).* [78]

Rhonda was another creatively dressed art teacher. She said she liked to wear bright and colourful clothes, especially for young children. She was teaching art in an old school hall that was large and cold, but Rhonda did not seem to mind.

> *My art room is not bad. There is plenty of room for drama and things and I can get right into it… make noise and a mess and not have to worry about it too much.* [79]

The isolation from the rest of the school and its size made it ideal for incorporating drama into the art classes.   Rhonda's story is based on a lesson I observed with kindergarten and exemplifies the way Rhonda used literature and drama in an integrated way to inspire the children. Rhonda saw art as a natural extension of the imaginative play of young children. This was interesting, given that Rhonda as a child engaged in an enormous amount of imaginative play and saw this as leading to her being a creative, artistic person. This vignette shows Rhonda adapting her teaching to the children's immediate learning context. The lesson was to be on autumn leaves, but on an unusually cold and miserable day, Rhonda changed ideas, opting for something based on feeling cold and miserable.

Rhonda's story

> Rhonda reads the story of "Wuff the Bear". It is a delightful children's book about the story of a bear hibernating for winter.

We don't have bears and snow in Australia, but on a day like today, I would love to be able to hibernate. Where do you go when you want to be by yourself? Where is a good place at home or at school where you like to hide? The children share their ideas. *Under my bed (Are there toys under your bed?) In the corner of my playground (Is your playground at home or at school) behind my wardrobe… I can climb in and feel snug. (Who would you take with you to your special place?) I would take my Mum… my teddy bear… my pyjamas.*

After this discussion, the children are asked to dramatise parts of the story. *You are a big hungry bear. Find some berries to eat. What colour are your berries? What do they taste like? Mine are sour. Come and taste one of my sour berries. (*A few children that are not participating are given the pretend berries from Rhonda and this effectively serves to draw them into the dramatic process) The class is lively and engaged. Rhonda is involved in the drama with the children. She is curling up on the floor and dashing around picking imaginary berries. *Now the cold winds of autumn are starting to come. Can you hear those cold winds (*Rhonda shakes some small bells) *You are leaves quivering in the wind. You flutter to the ground. Now you are a bear you need to find a safe warm place to hibernate. Make sure your place is safe. I have some sheets here you can use if you like (*Rhonda supplies a buddle of old bed linen that can be used to create caves for hibernation). *Now that you are in your cave it is the quiet stillness of winter. All I can hear is the sound of peacefully sleeping bears. Now wake up very slowly and stretch because you can feel a warmth coming. Spring is on its way. Creep quietly back to the front of the room and sit down on the floor. Close your eyes and imagine you are hibernating in a special place where it is really warm and comfortable. Maybe it is that special place you told me about at home or at school. It can be a place in your imagination or it can be a real place. Get a picture of that place in your brain. What is inside it? What is around it? What are you wearing? Who is in there with you? Now we are going to use crayons and draw on some lovely big art paper. What side of the paper do we draw on? The rough side or the shiny side? Do you think Mrs B wants tiny little pictures? I want you to use as much of this lovely paper as you can. Remember real or imaginary. It is whatever you like.* [80]

The examples observed supported Condous' (1999) view of successful teachers who he describes as being imaginative and possessing a warm feeling towards their students and a lively sense of humour. Condous (1999: 17) describes an accomplished art teacher as being, "a dramatic person, a person who is able to act and be alive with the interest and motivation of the work he (sic) is presenting".

The next chapter explores the feelings and qualities of the accomplished teachers. These aspects may be described as being their attitudes and spiritual character.

12 Conversations of passion

> The occasion for making of a Friendship quilt may be monumental or quite
> incidental.
> (Pellman and Pellman 1984: 106)

12.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the personal qualities of the art teachers that became apparent in the critical friends meetings, school visits and reflective conversations. The two themes identified in this section are about affective aspects of the teacher's beliefs and behaviours. These themes emerged largely from tacit feelings and aspects intuited from the conversations of the teachers. Feelings and innate 'spiritual' qualities of the art teachers seemed to be a highly significant influence on the way they think and act, and have importance to delineating accomplished teachers. They are described in this chapter as passion and the "wow" factor.

12.2 *I think if you are passionate about something … Passion.*

Passion is defined by the Oxford Dictionary (Pearsall 1998: 1356) as being an "intense desire or enthusiasm for something." Given this definition it was clear that all the critical friends possessed a passion for art and the role it played both in their lives and the lives of their students. Passion was a word the teachers frequently used when talking about art and teaching. Passion, as used by the accomplished teachers, included many aspects of their practice. At the heart of their passion was an attitude of curiosity, fascination and a level of excitement about everything visual in the world. They transmitted this excitement to the students and a characteristic noted during their teaching was the strong motivational skills they possessed and the way they captured the attention and interest of the children.

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I think if you are passionate about something and you become really excited about something it rubs off.[81]

I think you need a great idea to inspire children. Something to really fire them up. Using a piece of art or whatever.[82]

I just try to convey my love of art to the children…. So I went into a class last week and they were just so creative. You know… I said, "you are wonderful artists. This is fabulous" you know and the kids can't wait to do art. Just build them up and give them excitement about art.[83]

The passion the accomplished art teachers possessed was also evident in the confidence they had in what they were doing and the way this confidence was transferred to the children. Condous (1999 17) refers to the importance of passion and enthusiasm in accomplished art teachers.

> The teacher's enthusiasm … is one of the most essential qualities. How often have you heard, 'Give me an enthusiastic teacher'? If this enthusiasm is lacking students cannot be expected to respond with interest, vitality and zeal because the teaching of the arts is an enterprise between people. The teacher not only needs to understand human beings but enjoy their company as well.

The accomplished art teachers possessed a clear love and enthusiasm, not just for the value of art and quality art education but for the children and other people around them. This enthusiasm was infectious and evident upon meeting any of the critical friends group.

> *I think art teaching is about confidence and dedication… love probably.[84]*

The emotional confidence the teachers had in themselves and their ability to teach art was reflected in strong practical and intellectual skills. They were passionate about upgrading their knowledge and skills. They were keen to share art knowledge and attend any forum that was likely to upgrade their skills or ideas.

> *I think it is also a constant thirst to want to learn and know more and to be able to impart that to your students. I think that is true whether it is philosophy of art, how to do something, or art of the present day… virtually all of the world … you can discover it through art.[85]*

The accomplished art teachers exhibited effective interpersonal skills and a willingness to learn. They showed sensitivity to the needs of students and saw themselves as sharing the children's excitement and being co-learners with the children in the journey of art education. This sensitivity was combined with seemingly boundless energy. As I visited the teachers and spent days shadowing them in their teaching environments, I was amazed by the levels of energy they possess. The teachers literally ran around the school as if on a

mission to spread their passion for art. In the later section of this thesis, I refer to what I described as the almost 'evangelical zeal' with which these teachers operated. Underlying all this energy was an immense passion for art and teaching. This was apparent in Marion's story. Marion is a forty-something teacher with masses of black curly hair. She dresses in bright clothes and wears arty jewellery. When I visited her school, we spent the whole day racing madly around putting up colourful displays, helping other teachers, running art clubs, trying to grab a bite of a salad bagel in between conducting art clubs and giving lessons, and even washing dishes in the staffroom at the end of the day! She clearly had a passion for art that was infectiously spread around the children and the school.

Marion's story

> *I must say passion is a word I use at the beginning of every staff meeting. I think also while we are talking about 'passion', children come to you in art with keenness, but if the Headmistress (is not supportive)…then I find that what happens at the top tends to filter all through the school… If the headmistress … she made the teachers come to an inservice I ran… and at first they didn't want to come and they were very neat… they came to my class, she can see that teaching art is so much fun and it can be neat. And I gave them lots of notes and I told them that we are going to be mad and passionate and all that thing… and they said, "we are passionately not mad" and I think it is like the same thing, if you passion… if there is someone with passion in the school… like we have a fabulous music teacher…. Then that passion spreads through because… If you have passion for anything you can actually spread it through your own school… You do not have to make a terrible mess and if I gave them sheet and handouts and all that sort of thing. And then they (the teachers) went back and they said "we have passion now" and they don't think I am just mad. The Principal is now very passionate about art and we do workshops on art so I think that is the way of spreading passion.*
>
> *I think a good art teacher needs to be a good planner, organiser… but also a dreamer. They need to be a goal setter… but also a lover of life… I really really love what I do. I can't think of anything else I would rather be doing. I am just so lucky. You also have to really love children and art.* [86]

I felt exhausted, but Marion was still buzzing with energy at the end of the day and was going off to an exhibition at a friend's school. She darted off at the end of our discussions to get some images ready for the next day. Lunch had still only had three bites!

12.3 *And it is really exciting* … The "wow" factor.

Extending beyond ideas of passion was something that the teachers referred to as the "*wow factor*". In defining this term it appeared to mean excitement and also that at any time something unexpected but breathtakingly moving or beautiful can occur. This term was used consistently by the accomplished teachers especially in relation to the children's

artistic achievements. The teachers spoke of becoming almost '*high*' on the wow factor. The chance that a child may make a new discovery, open their eyes visually for the first time, or produce some new and innovative response was the engine that powered much of their teaching. The accomplished teachers referred to the unexpected wow factor as a potent force that kept them '*going*' in art teaching despite often severe structural restrictions and difficulties associated with teaching art within their particular context.

> *Learning new things is the best part about this world. I just love waking up and knowing that I am going to learn something new today (and as an aside to me… really everything in this class and everything I teach is about art!).* [87]

> *If you teach art every day the kids still come excited. It is like you are about to open a big door and it is really exciting. You are exposing the kids to that each time. It is really exciting. It is exciting to see their art.* [88]

> *Art is just so enjoyable for the teachers. I mean, we are classroom teachers, but we teach art at sometime during the day, in all different curriculum areas so the children absolutely love school. They think it is Christmas.* [89]

Bronwyn's story typifies the '*buzz*' the accomplished teachers described. Bronwyn is a casual (substitute) teacher. Many teachers perceive this to be the worst option in teaching. Bronwyn travels long distances from her home to replace teachers who are absent. She has limited time to prepare and rarely knows where she will be teaching.

Bronwyn's story

> *To me that is what I love most about art (every child is successful and viewed as an artist). I think that perhaps excitement is it. We had another casual teacher today, she was someone I haven't seen for ages… she's had 3 kids and all the rest of it, but she said to me, "You are still so excited." I can't believe it." Or something like that and I thought well why wouldn't I be… I enjoy every day… I look forward to it.*
>
> *It is all about enthusiasm. I did an art lesson a while ago, and I have done it lots of times in different schools and it is very, very simple and that's why I do it. Because I am a casual teacher and I can just go in and do it. But the exciting thing is that the product is always so different. I mean every school you do it at, you get a different style…every kid gets a different result and you can be enthusiastic about that and say, "WOW!" You know… I haven't seen that one before. I think the "wow" part is really important. One of the young teachers at school was saying I sound just like you. I was saying, "Wow! Isn't that great…? Look at this… That is fantastic" Something like that and I thought, "Oh that is good, I've started another teacher teaching that way! It is good.* [90]

The teachers fuelled this 'wow' feeling by attending galleries. They spoke of going to galleries as rejuvenating and inspirational.

We go to all the exhibitions we can. We drop into Canberra a lot (the National Gallery) and local country ones. You often see amazing art there. People get the idea that it is very provincial. Like there is a lovely little gallery at Cooma and you would think it would be all full of gum trees but it has some really exciting stuff. Big installation art.[91]

I go up to that one at Erina. It is a lovely drive and there is some really good stuff. Fantastic sculpture (This is in reference to a community-based gallery about 1 1/2 hours drive north of Sydney, in a large regional area.) Yes, I look at art every day I get just so excited![92]

The teachers received a thrill when one of their students became an art lover. I surmised that there was a link between a child's 'conversion' to the art cause and the detailed descriptions they recounted of their own significant art encounters. It seemed that the accomplished art teachers' encounters with art were transforming and life-shaping experience in their lives and that they wanted similar encounters for their students. When these occurred the teachers felt an enormous sense of pride that hits them in the wave they described as the 'wow factor'. They spoke of the importance of children getting the opportunity to fully experience the beauty and thrill of art. This was seen to be one way of addressing social inequity. This issue was described poignantly in Jo's story. Jo team-teaches with David in a kindergarten at a very poor school in southwestern Sydney. Most of the four and five year olds in the class have never been to the city of Sydney and would ordinarily never be exposed to art.

Jo's (and David's) Story

I have a kindergarten class I am teaching and there was an exhibition on 20th century masters and I was teaching the kids about Picasso and Gauguin and they were all really excited and I got them hands-on acting out the painting. We wrote stories about it and the kids dressed up as the Gauguin lady and did life sketches and then I brought them here to the Art Gallery (of NSW) and I had already done all the background and had all the background and seen the paintings in the book and I said , 'you can't run' and these grand old ladies were walking around and the children were saying, "Excuse me Miss there is the Gauguin we are studying." The old ladies couldn't believe it. It was just so wonderful. The kids just love it and the parents love it too. One parent said to me that she said to her boys that they could go anywhere they wanted in the holidays and the little boy chose the Art Gallery (of NSW) to come back to and she said it was just so wonderful and they get that love of the art gallery. This love can last a whole lifetime.

You look at the portraits of Brett Whiteley where he had his whole life in his pictures and you can talk about things like that with the children and they will never forget it and they will travel around the world looking at different paintings. It is a very exciting thing to be involved in.

> *The other thing is when they are observing art and it suddenly clicks and you hear about the parents being dragged to the Art Gallery and all of a sudden this whole thing has opened up and they have learnt to relate to it. That is the other side. The appreciating. That is just wonderful. It is such a buzz. It is just so important. There is an important equity aspect to art too. When I do training and development with teachers and they say I was no good (at art) and I have no time (for art). But then you think of the art experiences we are giving children.. and I think how very wrong. How can you not give that experience to children? How can there be some children who have all of this and teachers who won't teach art. Those teachers don't realise until it's pointed out to them that they are robbing these children of access to places like art galleries and feeling comfortable in this part of their culture. All of that has equity aspects. It is just so important that the choice is there.[93]*

During the four critical friends meetings in 2000, the teachers shared special moments they had experienced that had given them the 'wow factor'. It seemed that these special moments could be shared and still retain their magic. The teachers listened to each other's wow moments and seemed to feel a sense of vicarious elation hearing these recounts.

> *Can I show a picture? (She holds up photo to show the rest of the critical friends group a picture depicting a constructed bedroom in the corner of a corridor) This is Van Gogh's bedroom. We set it up in the corridor. And I heard a child, this big kindergarten boy, say that's not the right coloured carpet. The children were really watching, saying the chair's right and that's right but not the carpet. But another one (child) said, "but he painted it lots of times so it doesn't matter what colour it is, brown green or something else" Wow! It's incredible.[94]*

The following chapter details the connection between the teachers' beliefs in relation to art and the extent to which these influence the values they place on primary art education and children's art learning.

13 The value of art in children's lives

*At its best, a quilt is a personal expression- not a mimic of the ideas or designs or
color preferences set down by someone else.*
(Laury 1970: 12)

13.1 Introduction:

This chapter explores themes emerging from the critical friends meetings, reflective
conversations and school visits that demonstrate the values and beliefs about art education
held by the accomplished teachers. Through their conversations the critical friends shared
the characteristics they value, and their views held in relation to art and its place in life. The
conversations revealed the beliefs the accomplished teachers' possessed in relation to
children's art learning and the value of art in children's lives. The twelve sub-themes
presented in this chapter, while addressed to art education, more broadly revealed the
accomplished teacher's views on learning and education.

13.2 *Art crosses all learning boundaries* … Aims.

The accomplished art teachers were significantly influenced by the manner in which they
defined art for the children and their beliefs about what constituted the key aims of art
education. When asked the question, "How do you define art for children?" and "What
would you like children to gain most from your art lessons?" in the first critical friends
session (in March, 2000) the answers reflected underlying beliefs about the value and
purpose of art education and how these values operated within the context in which they
were teaching. Grauer (1999) notes that accomplished art teachers operate on the basis of
personally held beliefs, and these more than external constructs or syllabi, govern the art
education received at the classroom level. For this reason it was significant to pursue the
ideals and beliefs the critical friends bring to their classrooms. Gooding-Brown (1999)
refers to these as the "dreams" of teachers and for the accomplished teachers these
underlying principles guided decision making in relation to art education. The most
significant aim alluded to by all the critical friends was the arousal of children's curiosity
about the world. They felt that an open, imaginative and creative mind was a vital aspect of
all learning, and most fully developed through engagement with art activities.

They (children) start to realise that there is a whole world out there and the children start looking. [95]

Curiosity. Oh yes curiosity is a lovely word. And you bring that curiosity to the children and they can discover other things. [96]

I think art is so important in the primary. It crosses all learning boundaries… history... social stuff... science... maths you know so I just made everything art. [97]

Maybe what I would put in the bottle is that notion of beauty in its broadest sense. We look and we can see things. And we want that for our students. We want them to be able to see and be inspired by the world. [98]

While the teachers held strong personal beliefs about the nature and value of art for children, some of the accomplished teachers actively pursued definitions of art with the children. These teachers felt it was important to engage their students in dialogue about the nature of art and its place within culture and society. These teachers encouraged the children to see art as dynamic and evolutionary, and avoid closed or static definitions.

I define art for children. I have a Picasso quote that says art is. I can't remember the exact words, but the gist of it is that you start off with an idea and what you finish with is never exactly what the idea was at the beginning…then it is art. But if you start off with an idea and you just do that and nothing else then it is not art. It has to develop. It has to be changed. The exact words of it a really good and I copied it off the wall at a Picasso exhibition many years ago.[99]

Three members of the critical friends group felt that children innately possessed complex and democratic definitions of art, and teachers should accept these definitions and not try to impose on the students a teacher-generated or normalised definition. These teachers interpreted art in it broadest sense and considered that it permeated all aspects of human life and culture, and thus found the complexity of defining it too great.

To traditional Aboriginal people there is no word for art. Art is all interwoven and it is really only this society. I am really hesitant to define art for children. There is a whole world out there and the question of 'What is art?' is still being asked. There are so many issues. But I sort of find that as the year progresses, slowly the children broaden their views. But I find that a real problem. I mean where does art actually stop. It just keeps on moving and so you are opening a whole new grammar.[100]

The accomplished teachers seemed to hold clear beliefs about art. The first of these was that children's art existed as part of the greater art world, not as a separate 'school art' phenomenon. Furthermore, it was by direct engagement with, and modelling of, the work of other artists that children developed the language and skills of art. Allied to this, was a belief that exposure to art should be a positive and pleasurable encounter that lead children

to develop a passion for art. The teachers saw art as contributing to the greater good of the child and society.

> *I guess for us, it is just getting the children to look at the work of artists and then the skills they develop that relate to the artists. They tend to transfer the skills they learn over to the next art lesson* [101]

> *We were just trying to expose them to art. We didn't want to get too technical our main goal is to give the kids' exposure to art that they might not have had the opportunity to see. . I guess what I really like is just the kids' enthusiasm for art.* [102]

Kay's story showed the link between these general aims and the importance of children creating artworks that were original and individual. To achieve this, Kay felt that children required a level of skill and knowledge development that enabled them to be confident to appreciate art and produce their own forms of artistic communication. Kay characterised these aims as dynamic and interrelated, resulting from negotiated learning between a child and his/her teacher.

Kay's story:

> *What is good art? What am I wanting the kids to do?… I guess more than anything I want them to be confident in their use of media… I want their own style. Neil is blossoming with some really sensitive work… and James is a really talented boy he just needs to work out what is right for him. Confidence… there is no use in spitting them all out the same… I don't like stilted art. The younger kids tend to need more technical skills. They are less confident and are reluctant to reject any ideas I give them. The older boys will listen to what I say and then decide if they want to take it on board or not. That's what I really want them to do. I want children to feel confident enough to reject my ideas. But to do this and be creative they need a foundation. I guess I teach the kids the way I was taught… but I always start with drawing first and all the basics and then we go into more creative and elaborate ways to use those ideas.* Kay talks about Eastern art education and feels that is a good model, starting with technique and then moving to creative areas. Both making and appreciating are fully integrated in that process. [103]

13.3 *You must get the kids where they are…* Children as central.

Anderson's (1999) survey of teachers found that one of the main motivations for the energy teachers put into their teaching was the impact they perceived they have on children's lives. Anderson found that children are at the centre of importance to teachers and that teachers gained a great deal from the process of encouraging children to be risk-takers and to achieve in art. The teachers in Anderson's study spoke of passion and love for art education. They received enormous satisfaction from the contribution they felt they make to the lives of the children they teach and humanity more broadly. They spoke of loving

their job and feeling satisfied with the life affecting changes they introduced to children through art education. Anderson (1999: 17) quotes one teacher as representative of the views of many; "I love what I am doing. And the only reason I'm still doing it is that it's so satisfying. The children are so satisfying." The feelings that Anderson notes in his study of American art teachers accorded with the views of the critical friends in this study. The motivation for their practices was the belief that children are special, and as art teachers, they were in a unique position to add value to these young people's lives. Educational decisions were premised on the notion that the children reside at the centre of educational endeavours.

> *Every child is brilliant and they are just as good as the top artists.*[104]

> *It doesn't matter what you are teaching ... if you want to get results you do have to adapt to the children… no matter what subject... you must get the kids where they are.*[105]

> *I think the thing I really enjoy is ... I just love children's art... It is just so fresh, so different, and so original and so I say to the children, I really get 35 or whatever it is different presents each time I teach an art lesson, because every time it is different. I think you have to be child centred to work with kids. You just have to adapt to their needs.*[106]

The critical friends group put their ideas about the importance of children being central to art education into practice by encouraging the children's involvement in the art planning process. As supported by Grauer's (1999: 21) research the 22 accomplished teachers in the critical friends group actively pursued instructional strategies that related the children's learning in art to their background, needs and interests. The teachers often chose themes or art ideas based on suggestions made by the children. While I was watching Rhonda teach a kindergarten class of four and five year olds, I observed how she changed the course of a lesson in response to the children. She had planned a printing lesson using autumn leaves, but when a child suggests they could place the leaves into recycled paper and paint over them, Rhonda thinks this is a better idea and instantly altered the lesson to accommodate the suggestion made by the child. When I asked her about this, she explained that she encourages the children to direct their art learning and finds that children offer more creative art ideas than she could think of.

> *I like to get the children involved in decision making and integrating their ideas into what we do. . I tend to go with the children's interests.*[107]

Similarly in Kay's classroom with senior students, they had been completing a unit of work based on detailed observational drawings and printing of under sea creatures. The lessons I observed involved drawing and painting sea creatures and shells.

> *Next lesson we will do some more washes and prints and stuff.* One child suggests that it would be good to colour their drawings. Kay says that although she hadn't thought of that, it is a good idea and they can photocopy some and try water coloured pencils next week). Another child suggests they could wrap fish like Christo. The children and Kay like this idea and it starts an amusing conversation about fish wrapping possibilities. Kay suggests she approach a fish merchant to get some fish.[108]

After this suggestion was made, Kay commented to me that while she starts with a program, she adapts to suggestions made by the class as she feels this gives the children a sense of ownership and the ability to direct their creative explorations.[109]

For other teachers, the child focus extended beyond just the content of teaching. These teachers perceive art to have strong powers of social change and used it to build the children's self esteem and address social justice and equity issues. Art a responsive subject than can enable children's needs to be addressed.

> *When they come to school the first thing they are supposed to think about art is that they are no good at it.* [110]

> *You have to think about the capabilities of the kids.* Lyn informs me that there are 2 children with major disabilities who are integrated into the class, including a boy with autism and severely disturbed behavioural patterns. None of this seems to phase the teacher who takes a bright and positive approach to her teaching and the children's learning. [111]

Tim's story, following, exemplified the powerful way in which some accomplished teachers used art to address social and personal issues in the lives of the children. Tim is a generalist sixth class teacher in a poor school. His class of eleven to thirteen year olds is a special 'slow learners' class. Many of the 30 children in his class experience violence and broken homes. The economic crisis has hit particularly hard and the area has huge unemployment and social problems associated with poverty and isolation. Despite the area, Tim is passionate about his school, class and the children. He is full of energy and enthusiasm, and it is evident that the children seem to be transformed when Tim teaches. Tim's story

> We return to the children who are patiently waiting.

> *Look at them. They are so controlled . They are not really encouraged to think for themselves or go beyond the frame. They are lovely kids though… I sometimes wonder if their parents ever talk to them. They have no general knowledge and are not aware of differences in the world.*
>
> *I always get the children who are a bit of misfits in my room (*The other critical friends who are classroom teachers agree with this comment) *But art is a wonderful escape for children who do not fit in whatever way we define that. Our principal wants us to try and make them (children who don't fit in) make friends. But why should we try and make everyone the same? When I was little, I had a special place I would go and hide when I felt bad or I wanted to be away from everyone else. Where do you go when you are upset? Children all need a safe haven and I hope my art classes provide somewhere that allows children to be themselves and be different.*
>
> *I will say to the boss, "come and have a look at this. This kid hasn't done a thing and everyone says what a revolting child he is." But in art … it is just so exciting.*
>
> *I like it when the footballers… you know the top kids… will admit they actually enjoy art… they will come up to the room and have an absolutely wonderful time and you get all these boys sewing! And they are getting such joy out of it. It really gives me a buzz.* [112]

13.4 *Every child is brilliant and they are just as good as top artists…* Child as artist.

Allied to the notion that children are central to the learning process was the conception that recognised the children as artists. All the teachers in the critical friends group described their classes as being made up of artists. This was most apparent during the school visits. As the accomplished teachers spoke to the children, they referred to them as artists. The classroom was the children's 'studio' and the children were expected to be responsible for the art studio's maintenance, preparation and cleaning up. The children's art was treated with reverence and respect. The nine accomplished teachers observed in the schools felt reluctant to draw or paint on the children's work and when artworks were displayed, they were mounted and arranged and referred to as the *'exhibition'* of children's work. Completed works were critiqued and discussed by the children and a photographic record was generally kept of each piece.

> *Every child is brilliant and they are just as good as top artists.* [113]

This statement indicated the accomplished teachers' powerful belief that the aim of art education was about increasing the art understandings and skills of all children, not just those children who may have a talent for art.

The issue of child ownership was exemplified in Jill's teaching. Jill showed me some of the previous artworks of the children. I was struck by how different each piece was and the deferential way Jill spoke of the children's work. She greatly admired the children's artistic talent. The children were clearly positioned as artists and spoken to as equals and collaborators in the art making process. Jill adopted the role of facilitator.

> *You are the architect of your own artwork. I give suggestions, but you decide whether to take them or not. I don't want people to rush work and then be disappointed in the second half of their work. Look, you thought yours wasn't going well… now look. Wow!* The child beams with pride at this praise, which has been given genuinely. Jill shows the child different mount colours and shows this to the class. The class decide which they like and comment. Then Jill asks the child to comment. The artist agrees. *Even when you think you have finished there are still things you can do.* [114]

Part of the idea that children were artists was encouraging them to take their time and to develop a critical eye to their work and the work of others. The accomplished teachers visited in the schools do not accept work instantly, rather advancing the child to respond critically to their work by critiquing their piece and developing an 'eye' for the work of other children.

> *You can admire your work for a moment* (Kay says as she hands the half finished art works to the boys) *because they are rather beautiful. It is better to do one or 2 really good works rather than rush and try and complete things.* [115]

Quality and professionalism from these young artists was of prime importance to the nine accomplished teachers visited. This was not based on the idea that every child must have a perfect end product, but rather the accomplished teachers saw their role was to induct the child into the world of the artist. Part of this induction process was to teach the children to care appropriately for the art studio, which in most cases was a cramped poorly equipped classroom!

> One girl clears the tables and covers them with large plastic sheets. Another child is dispatched to find drawing pencils from another classroom. *Where are the artists who were sitting here? Part of being an artist is cleaning up. How are you artists going over here? Next time when other people are painting you can come back and add more detail. Are you being nice to those brushes?*[116]

13.5 *Just messy little creatures…* Creativity and Imagination.

The critical friends talked a great deal about notions of creativity and imagination. These were highly prized aspects of both the method of their teaching and as significant values to impart to the children. Interestingly, the critical friends felt they were still struggling with

what these terms really meant and how to balance the acquisition of skills and knowledge in art education with the desire to promote creativity and imaginative engagement of children in the artistic process.

> *I said to my class, "What is creativity?" And one of the little girls said pictures in my mind… and I thought that was quite nice.*[117]

Several of the accomplished teachers in the critical friends group identified themselves as being imaginative and creative individuals. Most considered they were born that way and this meant that they do not readily conform to school structures, either as children or later as adults. Hilary's story gave an insight into her personal experiences of being a creative child and the value she places on creativity and imagination in art education.

Marion's story

> *There are children who are just messy little creatures who don't seem to produce all that much but they will be talking away to themselves, oblivious of everyone around them and playing with stuff on the floor… and I think I was like that as a child…I was always so distracted and the teachers would ask me a question and I would think, "oh my God!" I was miles away from what everyone else was saying and I think to go back to that, but I think some children, I feel a bit embarrassed but there are some children who are innately creative and make a lot of mess and not produce anything really most lessons. But some produce beautiful work and some will just talk about it. I have this amazing girl in year 3, Jan and she does these pictures with wild eyes and she is messy and I don't really know what is going on… where does this creative thing finish, because she likes to talk about her work.*
>
> *Good children's art… Now that's a very big question.(big pause) . Yet I know it when I look at a piece of art. I suppose it is about whether the children have mastered design elements. Children almost do that intuitively. Experimenting is really important. Really I guess extending themselves or attempting to extend themselves. I can look at art and say that is good… but I can't define it. It is about showing children different perspectives… taking them beyond what they know to the other side of things. And creativity… creativity is really important. For example, they all have an idea of what a butterfly looks like…but in this activity I got them to look at pictures of butterflies and see the real diversity of shapes… and then to think about colour mixing and balance… I think their work is also good if they have listened to what I have said and put it into practice. You know good art but it is really hard to define it. Often it is what the girls have in their heads... something more which makes it a really good art lesson. Like one girl does really mad colours, but it works so it is weird because it is not always when they stick to what I set out to do.* [118]

Marion's story emphasised the contradictions apparent in many of the accomplished teachers' conversations in relation to issues of creativity and imagination. Marion sees art as being both intuitive and teachable, innate and learned, coming from the child and being directed by the teacher, being wild and non-conformist and listening to instructions. This

existence of binary opposites was apparent in the accomplished teachers' conversations about art. Postmodernist conceptions of art support the idea that contrast and opposition exist simultaneously and this is a natural and desirable aspect of visual arts. Conversely, the contrasts within teachers' comments could indicate a sense of confusion the critical friends felt in balancing seemingly opposing theories in art education. For example, many of the accomplished teachers in the critical friends group reflected modernist art education principles particularly studying the elements and principles of design, and yet still reflected a growing questioning of modernist principles by extensive gallery exposure to postmodernist and challenging artworks. When I questioned the critical friends in relation to these seeming contradictions, they were initially unaware of the contradiction, but then admitted that they often felt unsure about their art teaching practice and questioned what they did. Several of the accomplished art teachers also saw the simultaneous existence of conflict as being valuable to art education giving the children a *'balanced exposure'* and maintaining what was perceived as the '*good bits*' from a number of art education approaches. On this latter point, the critical friends seemed largely reluctant to move with trends or what they termed *'short term fashion'* in art education, rather holding the position that they instinctively, through feeling, experimentation and reflection, developed eclectic models of practice that were the most effective forms of teaching within their particular context. Several of the teachers expressed the view that conflict and disorder in art education practices and theory was beneficial and instinctively promoted creative and imaginative practices. One of the accomplished teachers, Tim, expressed concern about the way in which structures and syllabi in schools destroy the creativity and imagination of teachers and children. He criticises the way children are discouraged through structural constraints from being different or adventurous.

> *A lot of these kids really lack imagination. I mean the school is great in lots of ways. It is really structured. But it lacks imagination and the children are just too compliant. I keep asking questions and trying to get the boss and the other teacher to think more creatively. To mess things up a bit. There is a sense that you should conform but that's not what it is all about.*[119]

The critical friends placed a high value on creativity and expressed the view that teaching should be an imaginative and challenging activity that pushes teachers, children and the system beyond their current comfort zone and encourages creative engagement.

13.6 *It is not someone else's…* **Individuality and originality.**

Bound with ideas of creativity and imagination was the belief expressed by the accomplished teachers that art education should promote individuality and originality in the responses, both appreciative and constructive, made by the children. The teachers spoke negatively of any teacher, program or activity where the resulting artworks were made to a formula and are not original and different. Difference was seen as being a highly positive outcome of art education. The main aim expressed by the accomplished teachers was that children present their ideas in an authentic, honest and original manner.

> *I think it is really important that art is individual and comes from the child. It is not someone else's.*[120]

> *It is all about being open. I teach about surrealism but I don't tell the kids what we are going to do. I don't say, "Now we are going to". I always give the children the choice. Treating them as individuals. It is all about opening doors. And it sounds like we are all like that.*[121]

> *The other art teacher at the school, who is gone now, her artwork used to look really good but it wasn't the children's work. It was more her stuff. My kids' art doesn't always look so flashy but it is really all their work. I think it is more valuable because it is the children's work.*[122]

Original work was highly prized and seen as having the most educational and artistic value.

> *It is important that the children are creative and that the work is individual. Right from the start you can do something different. I like to really point out that to the kids. Different does not equal bad… its true with friendships, anti-racism, learning and their work.*[123]

It was important to the critical friends that not only the product was individual and original, but that the ideas to create the artwork have been generated by the child. The child should feel a sense of ownership over the process and the accomplished teacher should allow enough freedom over that process that original responses are likely to emerge.

> *I would say that it is their own ideas. That is the first thing to me. I don't care if it is not so good. The very basic thing I want is that I want them confident enough to be doing their own art making and not wanting to copy from each other. That would be my first thing.* [124]

Interestingly though, one accomplished art teacher distinguished this ownership as being separateto originality. She indicated that she directs children in their art making and desires an individual response, but will be critical of children if their responses mirror images within the child's immediate media environment, such as Pokemon characters. This was a

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significant point as it indicated that this accomplished teacher maintained a view of originality based more on an expressive conception of art that holds that art must come from the soul and be unique to the child. A postmodernist view of originality would accept reproduction and appropriation as valid and valuable forms of art.

> *Not copying from Pokemons. Because I have set design topics and they straight away fill them with cartoon characters and I say I don't want those. I want you to come up with something of your own.*[125]

Some of the accomplished art teachers viewed originality and individuality as being more than simply an aspect of effective art practice. For some of these teachers, originality and individuality underscored more insidious social pressures. Tim spoke of the way society wants people all the same. He surmised that the structures within education work to make everyone alike and to standardise things. He felt there was a great need to promote the idea that difference was good. He maintained that if the children learnt this in art they may transfer these ideas to issues of race, religion, nationality and other social problems caused by groups of people not accepting the differences of others.

> *I don't think there is ever a right answer in art. I try to make the children see that their responses are valued. The children can be encouraged to understand that being different doesn't matter. It is important that you accept different conceptions of things. Yes individuality. It is very much about expression. A more general thing that I would say about creativity in the classroom is that individual personalities are not bad. The whole concept of different, beyond art… It certainly impacts on art but in a way it is more it is about being different.* [126]

13.7 *His is heaps sick …* Art as language.

The accomplished art teachers considered art to be a form of language. This idea was enacted in two ways. Firstly, the teachers felt they have an important function to perform in giving student the words and language to enable children to talk about their artwork and the work of artists. They encouraged the children to talk to each other in class about their art making. Every lesson began with a period of at least ten minutes where the accomplished teachers I observed talked with the class about art, and during the lesson and at the completion of the lesson, the teachers actively engaged their students in conversations about their artmaking.

> *You can talk quietly if you can do that and work at the same time.* Some boys are talking with each other; "His is heaps sick". This is a real compliment and is said as the boy is pointing to a specific area of pattern in another boy's work. The children are being encouraged to not just stop at one answer. Tim is moving around the room questioning individual children and challenging them to go further with what

they are doing. *I think the language of art is really important because you can't express what you feel without some sort of vocabulary. [127]*

While most of the teachers developed the children's vocabulary through oral activities, accomplished teachers I observed working with the older grades also used writing as a way to induct children into the language of art. The children completed art process diaries, conducted research and wrote critical essays about artworks and the historical and cultural context of works

> *Actually something I didn't mention is that I get kids to write reviews, about their work about what they have done, about other children's work.[128]*

Jan and Ann's conversation, which follows, showed the way specific language components were developed through their teaching. The critical friends group considered that children needed to know and understand the language associated with the elements and principles of design. By engaging the children in verbal interactions related to colour, line, texture and other elements, children developed a dialogue that applied in their own artmaking and extended to their discussions of the works of artists.

<u>Jan and Ann's conversation</u>

> *Ann: It (elements and principles) has got to be there. It is a foundation. It is more an intuitive way of teaching to it. It is like Piaget's theory… you know it…you teach through it… but you don't actually say this is it.*
>
> *Jan: But I do think you use the language.*
>
> *Ann: I refer to the elements and principles by name and use those sorts of words. You are modelling it all the time. I don't really know I think probably the best thing I did last year… was um give the children a language to talk about what they were doing or to talk about artworks… To talk about how it made them feel and why and so if someone's space was a really close personal space...staring at you, demanding your attention…what does that make you feel?… and sort of looking a lot at advertising all different artworks and then I noticed that when they were sitting and doing their works they were very much constructing an image...very much using these tools to construct an image. They were talking about personal space. They were talking about angle. They were talking about all these complex things just through saying to them, "Why does this image make you feel like this? Why have they used this image? How has this image been enhanced? How has it been altered for effect?"[129]*

The second view of art as language was linked to the next section on expression of feeling. The teachers felt that making art was a powerful form of communication and a visual

language. The teachers articulated the need to make their students literate in visual language and saw that being able to express ideas and feelings visually was significant.

> *I think art has a huge role to play in the lives of my students. It is so important to be able to communicate ideas, and in this school it is important that there is no right answer... no right or wrong. They can explore through art and talk to me in their art works. They can express ideas that maybe can't be verbalised...[130]*

13.8 *It is making them think….* Art as learning.

Associated with the idea that art was a powerful form of communication, the accomplished teachers spoke of art as a form of knowledge and understanding. Several of the teachers stated that art had a positive impact on children's learning styles and was a significant part of making children go beyond recall and presentation of information to really creating new knowledges and understandings. The view was expressed that engagement in art improved perception and a child's ability to think.

> *I think it is really important that art teaches kids to really perceive things.[131]*

> *It is making them think. [132]*

While most of the critical friends group acknowledged a certain level of innateness in the development of artistic ability, they also expressed the view that perception and creative thinking can be taught through art and that these were learnable attributes. This supports Speck's (1999:78) view that teachers generally believe that "art learning and artistic development are not simply maturation but that the kind of learning experiences children have are most important."

> *It is interesting because children do not always perform innately. Children who are able to take the instruction on which are where you are coming from, but at the other end of the scale. It is hard to get that balance, isn't it (the balance between direction and freedom). Some children will learn a formula and then practise it and the practise it. I know myself as a child, I did learn formulas of how to draw some things a set way. I remember that then I had confidence... so if they learn to draw one or two things well. That then gives them a sort of base to work from.[133]*

Similarly, the critical friends commented about noticing that the children entered their classes with a preconceived notion of the nature of art. They felt it was their role to challenge the children's preconceptions and introduce them to new forms of art. Generally, this was done through engaging the children in learning conversations using challenging and innovative art activities and through these activities the children develop expanded

conceptions. In this way, art learning was embedded in the practice of art making and appreciating the work of other children and recognised artists.

> *I don't really tell them what art is. I ask them what they think and they usually say pictures, painting, and drawing. We have had some interesting discussions about whether photography is art and they had the general feeling from the children to start off with has been that it is not. They have this purest idea of formal painting. I don't know where that (attitude) comes from because that is not coming from the school at all, but I have never said what is art, ever.[134]*

> *I think you said earlier that you could teach people to draw or paint. I think it is a very important thing and for us to be able to do that not only to be able to look at works of famous artists, art through history and things like that but perhaps we need to be able to teach children to think.[135]*

The accomplished art teachers expressed the view that the type of thinking engaged in as part of art learning was unique and vital to children's total learning. It was considered that art opens the mind to different forms of learning and that these were transferable to other contexts and served to enhance a child's ability to think constructively, creatively and imaginatively.

> *So you are looking at a lot of different things and they are actually concepts that we as teachers should be trying to give those children to assist them and if you can give them those things. It is just like learning to read. It is those basic foundations. Learning to do all those things and then when they start doing those things It doesn't have to be the same as someone else's.[136]*

The accomplished teachers approach to art learning oscillated between a constructivist conception (that emphasised starting with the children's understandings and working from that point, largely driven by the children's interests and desires, and discovery) and experiential models of learning (where provocations and problems were presented to the children to encourage them to challenge previously held beliefs and ideals.) Interestingly, the teachers did not use these terms or refer to notions of discovery learning or constructivism when describing the ways they conceptualised art learning. Yet, the accomplished teachers instinctively used a constructivist model, attuning learning to the children's experiences. It was also seen as significant that art learning transported children *from* their immediate environment.

> *You need appreciation, understanding, a bit of knowledge, sensitivity towards art and this is important in their everyday lives to be able to appreciate the beauty of a tree, outside and then recognise that the colours on that tree are similar to the colours on here and that colour and shape and so on can be all around them. Art is about experiencing and having other ideas that can go out from that immediate circle.[137]*

13.9 *Children need visual symbols to express feelings and ideas…* **Expression of**
feeling.

As indicated in the previous section, the use of art as a form of communication, particularly
the communication of feelings was seen to be one of the fundamental motives behind the
accomplished teachers' passion to induct children into the world of art.

> *I think the language of art is really important because the children need to use*
> *these visual symbols to express their feelings and ideas.[138]*

> *If we give them the tools to be able to express their feelings, it is then likely that the*
> *children's work will be highly individual.[139]*

The importance of art as a tool to express feelings and encapsulate ideas was portrayed in a
startling manner in Tim's story.

Tim's story

> *I want to relate just a little story. Many years ago when I was in the schools, I*
> *started out as an ESL teacher and groups of kids would be coming in and refugees.*
> *And there was one child who had had really traumatic experiences. And I would*
> *give them large paper and say go to it with drawing and then we are going to talk*
> *about your drawings. So this child, has only chosen black out of the whole array of*
> *coloured crayons and has painted buildings and palm trees and dead bodies and*
> *planes and bombers um and to me that art, whatever it is … that expression is so*
> *important. Art provides a vehicle for the emotions as well as very structured*
> *things. You have got to allow children just to immerse themselves in that*
> *expression, because there is no way that this child would have had the opportunity*
> *to put down those feelings and ideas until he was given a brush… and drawing on*
> *their experiences. It was supposed to be an artwork about what he saw at*
> *school![140]*

Furthermore, Tim felt that when a child was trying to communicate visually that teachers
needed to react positively and support the child through this process.

Tim's story, too

> *Even just one encouraging comment. For me art was where students could be*
> *really happy. So for me when I started teaching it didn't matter what subject I was*
> *teaching, I would turn it into an art lesson… and it still is like that. I guess in my*
> *teaching it is all about creativity… It is tied to spirituality. The children need to*
> *know that there is another way. I asked this one kid if I could keep his artwork.*
> *That kid was just transformed by that. He thought that something he had done had*
> *value. He went on to do art at high school and now he is doing a course in*
> *multimedia and art. It made me realise what a positive force for change art can*
> *be.[141]*

13.10 *Art is not so much about teaching as about learning alongside...* Listening to conversations.

Part of developing art as a language and a mode for the expression of feeling, relied on the accomplished teachers skilfully engaging the children in visual and verbal conversations in relation to making and appreciating art. Every accomplished teacher I observed was outstanding at asking questions and drawing the children into conversations about their art. Visually, they provided a large volume of pictures to act as stimuli for the artmaking conversations. They carefully chose images that enticed the children into this conversation. The accomplished teachers I observed began every lesson with verbal responsive questions aimed at engaging the children in conversation about artworks. During the lessons, the teachers rarely sat down. Instead they moved around the room talking to children about their artmaking and visual ideas. One interesting aspect I noticed during these visits was that all the accomplished teachers physically got down to the same level as the children when they engaged in these art conversations. They used body language and eye contact skills and spoke with the child at both a physically and metaphorically equal level. They appeared to give each child their total attention, while remaining aware of what was happening throughout the class.

> The room is noisy with the chatter about the artworks. The teacher talks to the children sharing her experiences with the children. It is not teacher centred. *It is about relaxing and having fun with the children… oh yes; sometimes you can just stand back. It is not so much about teaching as about learning alongside.* [142]

The critical friends group felt that preservice art education needed to focus more specifically on developing learning conversations with children. The accomplished teachers expressed the view that many teachers were frightened of teaching because they do not feel comfortable to enter into learning conversations with the children.

> *I think a lot of teachers don't know how to give children advice. How to look at or improve their artwork, what to do with it. I always tell them you can do this or do that. I think they (teachers) need to trust themselves a bit. Whatever they think at the time. When the child asks for some advice, think about it a bit and just throw it back onto the child.* [143]

The accomplished teachers spent considerable time talking to the children in their class about their work. The teachers felt that the sharing of ideas gave as much to the teacher as it does to any child. The conversations reflected a highly reciprocal learning community.

> *I am just amazed what I can get by working with the children. Learning from the children.* [144]

It was only when I started teaching that I realised that I loved art and the children's art. I loved colour and the colours that the children used…I loved their art. And I think the children actually gave me confidence... I would draw things on the board and the children would say, "that's really good." And that gave me confidence to try more art things. So for me, even though I really love drawing… I really love sewing and the more craft things…so it was really just children who encouraged me.[145]

I like to be able to sit down with the kids and make art and they find it very funny, because often their work is better than mine is.[146]

All the accomplished teachers observed set high standards for the children's art. The learning conversations reflected these standards. The teachers used high level art language and presented complex concepts often using adult resource books and images, even with young children. This was exemplified as I watched Jill teach a group of 10 to 12 year olds. My story, as I watch Jill's class:

> Jill does not talk down to the students but rather expects that the children will understand the complexities and subtleties of the article presented (It is an article contrasting two approaches to landscape from the journal written for the Art Gallery of NSW Society). The children seem to have a good understanding of the conversations and appear to be listening intently and offering comments throughout.
>
> They demonstrate a real eagerness to talk about art and chat happily about Van Gogh, portraiture and ceramics. Despite lack of time, Jill spares precious moments to speak with these children and is fully engaged in their conversations about art. Jill speaks supportively and in a friendly manner to the children.
>
> The lesson began with an initial period, which lasted about twenty minutes, of conversations about art while the children sat comfortably on the floor looking at a range of art books, gallery catalogues and art gallery brochures. After this, the children start work immediately. A few children pause to think after they have written their name. Jill targets these children and goes up and crouches beside them and talks to them about their art. It is important to note that these are conversations… Jill responds to the children and a two-way dialogue is in process. Once the children are all working, Jill moves around the room to check they all have enough space to work and all the materials needed.
>
> The children are engrossed in their work. Some children ask questions. Jill moves around the class assisting individual children. She makes suggestions, will draw on the child's work to show techniques and uses questioning to encourage the children to find their own solutions. The children seem to really value Jill's input and will wait patiently until she comes to them to discuss aspects of their work. Jill never appears rushed and will give ample time to talk about the art with each child who wants to. As she moves around the class giving specific help, Jill will also break this with more generalised praise to the whole group.[147]

While this description is of Jill's class, I observed patterns similar to this in all the classes I visited. There was an uncanny similarity between the accomplished teachers visited and the way they conducted conversations with the children. Another particular aspect I noted was that no matter how busy or rushed for time the accomplished teachers were, they gave time to any child who wanted it and ensured that this time was a positive and inspiring for the child. I did not hear any teacher making a negative comment to any of the children in all the classes observed. At all times, they looked for the positive and tried to draw the child into art conversations with enthusiasm and gusto.

> *I have one naughty kid in the class and I consciously try and stop myself saying something negative and I won't say his name more than 5 times a day. Because I always think, no matter what, this is their childhood and they are going to remember that, so I always try to be really positive.[148]*

13.11 *Art is very powerful …* Artistic literacy.

The critical friends considered that being visually literate was a vital part of current and future lives. There were two ways that this idea was developed through the practice of the accomplished teachers. Firstly, there was the view, as exemplified through Paolo's story, that art is an increasingly important aspect of the cultural and economic life of society. She consciously instructed her class on the place of art in contemporary society.

Paolo's story

> *I try to show the children that art is very powerful in today's media and TV and computers. I show them images from the media and we talk about how they have been manipulated and the persuasive power of imagery. I think it is really important that children understand this. Because then we moved into reader's position in writing, it became a huge segment in all the things we were doing. But I don't know if in art it is ethically right. To teach them that the world is quite constructed at times. But they (the children) liked it and it really helped them a lot. Because they had the language, which I thought was really powerful.*
>
> *This is where the appraisal unit in the new syllabus works well. It helps a lot. People will start understanding that this is a very visually literate society and as this occurs people are starting to understand that art involves more thinking than people originally think and that there are jobs. Artists don't starve in garrets any more. Most artists can make quite a good living. People are starting to turn their ideas around. We just need the teachers of the future to understand that. And then we will get somewhere, but until we can change some of the old ideas about artists. That artists can be valued and have a lot to contribute. And the importance of visual literacy. This should all go some way to change thinking. Until we sort of get that step in the right direction. [149]*

The second view was that all children have the social rights to be visually literate. For many of the accomplished art teachers, bringing visual literacy to children in the poorer

sectors of society played a pivotal role in addressing social inequity. This was strongly supported by the critical friends group when Jo and David described an art and language program that operated in their kindergarten class. Jo and David team-teach in a poor southwestern Sydney school. The children in this class face enormous social and educational disadvantage. Jo and David developed a reading and literacy program that was based around the study of art and artists. This program had inspired the parents and the community to become interested in art and going to the Art Gallery of New South Wales. David recounted to the critical friends group the story of a mother coming into his class. He had a Seurat print on the wall at the front of the classroom. The mother of a boy in their class remarks that it was a "*Real good painting sir. Jeez, did you do that?*"[150] When David explained that it was done by an artist and tells the mother the artist's name she was most impressed, and next day returned with some books she had found at the local library about other artists, and declares, *"that up until now she had never really looked at pictures and all that art stuff, but since her son had been learning about it, she had become really interested too"* [151]. Both Jo and David felt they were doing something worthwhile in giving underprivileged children access to visual literacy.

Jo and David's story, shared with the critical friends:

> *Jo: We are programming our art around our study of sounds (in kindergarten). So we study the sound of the week and also the artist of the week.   So we try and get copies of lots of work that the artists have done and we talk about the techniques and try to go into that in the activities we plan.* (Everyone in the critical friends group says... that sounds great give us details) *We have done Monet and we did watercolours and talked about the use of the light. And we did Seurat and we have done a lot of other artists. We didn't really know that many artists when we started so we just used to look them up on the Internet. So after we have done the 26 letters and been through the art program they will have been exposed to all those different artists.*
>
> *Bronwyn: You are doing stunning stuff with that age group, does it then follow through?*
>
> *Jo: Last year was the first year we actually started it and we actually took all kindergarten to an excursion to the Art Gallery (Art Gallery of NSW).*
>
> *David: It has been taken up. Year 6 also do some studies they were doing ceramics at the same time as we were fiddling around with clay.*
>
> *Fiona: Just having the kids with the artworks around them. The exposure. It is really important.*

> *Jo: They begin to recognise some of the paintings. The children are just beginning to understand that these are famous artworks. And one of our students last year was asking his Dad if they could go to the Art Gallery so they could see the art.*
>
> *David: I have a K-1 this year and the kindergarten that I had last year is the greatest resource. You can ask them, "What is the artist for the week?" and they will know straight away and say Monet. And they will know the techniques (with which the work was painted). It has been a great learning experience for us too. I didn't really have any art experience until the beginning of last year and now I go to the Art Gallery and buy art books and get really interested. [152]*

13.12 *Making sure that they have a sense of ownership…* Ownership.

The accomplished teachers expressed the view that art was the property of the children and that they, as teachers, were privileged when the children allowed them to enter into this world and share the children's feelings as expressed through their art.

> *There is that whole thing of ownership. I would say the children's ownership of their work is just so important. They own a character or an artwork and they can relate to it. [153]*
>
> *I think there is a lot you can do in the classroom to make the children feel better about their own artwork. Making sure that they have a sense of ownership and that it is a positive experience is good for a start. That works really well. [154]*

The sense of the child's ownership of an art piece was reflected in the way the teachers' commented about the children's art. They were always very positive and while they made suggestions in relation to additional things that a child could add to his or her work, the teachers maintained that the ultimate decisions about a work rested with the children. Teachers were particularly clear that the children owned their work and ideas. While some teachers would intervene and even draw on a child's artwork, this was only done with permission from the child. The sense of ownership in relation to the children's work led the teachers to considerable indecision in relation to assessment in art education.

13.13 *I find outcomes really impossible in art…* Assessment in art.

Associated with the view that children own their art making, assessment was an issue that caused concern for the accomplished teachers. Assessment in art is mandatory policy (Board of Studies 2000) in New South Wales schools and yet the accomplished teachers saw this as problematic. Basically, the critical friends group were divided into three standpoints in relation to assessment. The first group consisted of accomplished teachers who felt assessment was so detrimental to children's art and ideas of expression of feeling,

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communication and child ownership that they saw assessment as being an affront to their beliefs about what was valuable in art education. These teachers were openly rebellious and refused to assess the children in art.

I never really formally assess. But I guess I do in my head. I always write a comment about art on the report and put samples in the progress book. I once got the kids to complete a questionnaire about their feelings and art. I asked them to rate things like feelings, ideas, and series. I think self-evaluation is the most effective form of evaluation[155]

On the reports we write a comment about achievement in art and what the children have been doing. But we can't do that any more because the new syllabus says we have to assess. It is stupid. There is no way I can say one work is better than another is. All I can do is say every child in my class has achieved those outcomes… the only way they wouldn't would be if the child really didn't want to do any art. But I have never found a child like that. I will just tick all the outcomes. To me what is important is that children express their own ideas. So one can't be better than another. I do encourage them to write about art and think about their work critically and look at other children's work. That is so important because they learn so much by doing that.[156]

I find outcomes really impossible in art, drama and creative writing and things like that because it is sort of contrary to what we do. I think it is really dangerous for teachers to be saying to children that they are not successful at something. Because the children are actually risking part of their person to us, taking it out of their heart and putting it in front of us like this. Then if we turn around and say, you get a 'B' or a 'C' or something for opening up your heart in this art work or in this writing or in this piece of drama or whatever creative thing, then just think of the impact we have. The negative things that have been said to us when we have opened up to something. There is no way I will betray that trust.[157]

The second group of accomplished teachers within the critical friends group viewed assessing art as problematic and difficult, but attempted to assess, if only to fulfil the mandated requirements. This group believed that assessment in art may be useful but that it may also be detrimental to art education.

Well you have to assess in art because that is what the syllabus says to do. And I know, we are right in the middle of it now. And with year 6 it is really difficult. They are all going to do extremely well. We cannot.. you know … they can all express themselves um I know there was one child that I put a question mark next to the outcome because he comes to art and just mucks around and wanted to show off to his mates and really wasn't involved and so he hasn't achieved. So it is a hard one to assess. But to me assessment is simply indicating what the children have done. If they all do it and they do it well…if they all put some thought into. It is more a statement about what has actually been achieved.[158]

It is more about ticking boxes to say that children have experienced that medium rather than ticking the fundamentals and I think art is rather a unique subject in primary school, because you can really only assess it by connecting with the kid. You know the children are really so creative, and they give so much of themselves

to you that you really only get a feel… Like if you are walking around talking to them you get a feeling of them without having to actually tick boxes. You can tick boxes that the children have experienced a thing but you can't tick how that experience has changed the children.[159]

We have to do outcomes for the reports. But really I think it is quite useless as every child could get the outcomes… unless they actually didn't do the work.[160]

The third group of accomplished teachers felt that assessment has the power to give status and legitimacy to art education. This group considered assessing art led to greater school and community support for the area and increased the profile of visual arts within the school. These teachers performed assessment in a detailed and systematic manner, and tried and incorporate children's self and peer assessment into the way they formed their judgements. In this group, assessment practices were systematic and formalised.

For assessment I write a comment about each kid next to his or her name on the role. I don't do it every lesson just when I think of it. I talk about attitude as well as application and ability, where particular things stand out for particular children. I try to always be positive. I talk about things like helpfulness, cooperation and keenness to have a go. I send these comments on to the teachers and they might write them on the kid's reports. Sometimes I write negative things but these are just for my own reference, so that I can really work with those kids, but I never pass these on to the teachers. What they get is always positive. With the older kids I will get them to look at and revisit an earlier work. We revise things we have looked at and talked about in class and I will give them a big blank piece of paper and say to the kids to divide it in 8 and then in each area I will get them to do a little 'test' just to see what they have remembered. Like draw a face and I will look to see where they have put the eyes. Because we have made lots of art works and talked a lot about the eyes being half way down the face. And then other things like colour mixing or composition. I get the children to mark this. And as we mark it we talk about their answers. It is really useful. Sometimes it will show me an idea of where to go with the next unit. [161]

Assessment was the most divisive subject among the critical friends group. There were heated discussions within each of the four critical friends session about the appropriateness or otherwise of assessment in art education. All the accomplished teachers tended to agree that the current syllabus and outcome statements (Board of Studies 2000) were not appropriate to art education. Assessment was seen as being something imposed by external people who have little understanding of the nature and processes of art education. Even those teachers who actively assessed their students, felt that they could create more personalised and appropriate measures of success than the external indicators given in syllabus documents. While some teachers considered it was valid and important to assess

the students, others were strongly opposed to this. For some of the accomplished art teachers, assessment was seen as yet another imposed structure that was designed to standardise and remove individuality, creativity and imagination from education. This was perceived as being harmful to children's artistic development. The diversity of views that were held within the critical friends group in relation to assessment is exemplified in Tim, Kay's and Marion's conversation

Tim, Kay and Marion's story:

> *Marion: Parents do want to know. But, I mean, I do the evaluation myself in my head and I really know most of my students, but the thing is with evaluation, I don't know but I think that is what is poor. It is all meant to correct bad art teachers to actually pull them up and it sounds really bad, but it is to haul up the people who are not doing their job. I don't really think, given the programming things. I was speaking to a girl … all the programs were handed in* (the group laughs and there is general discussion about them all being 'rebels' and not handing in or sticking to their programs*) I mean do you know Daphne? She is a lovely art teacher and she was saying that really it is all to haul up the teachers who are not doing anything.*
>
> *Tim: But who is doing the hauling up? Are they people who really value art? Or is it people who like boxes being ticked? I think that it is important that there is no right and wrong. Also there is never anything that can't be fixed up. The children will say, "Oh this is terrible." Sometimes I feel that after a day's lessons*
>
> *Kay: The first thing I developed was a mark for Visual arts. I had to do this to make it clear to the boys the value of visual arts. I needed to change the culture of the school so I was sort of fighting with that and so for me, it was how to change that. I do assess at the moment, mainly because I have been employed to make art a serious subject within the school and before I came, it wasn't a serious subject, so for me that has been very difficult. I teach in a school that is very mark orientated and there is a belief, a culture that if the subject doesn't have a mark it has no importance, and that is an idea we are trying to overcome, and having said I assess it, I don't give them marks for their art. I get the boys every term they do a personal evaluation of their work. They, the older boys have a visual arts diary in which they will hopefully write about their process. We put up exhibitions… the boys have a newspaper in which they write things up. It is interesting, because the high school examines drawing in the first couple of weeks of the year 7 and they do that so they know where the boys have come from so this year is the first year but we are going to have a drawing exam with the year 6 boys. But other forms of assessment are just diaries, exhibitions, personal reflections. The boys have to do an assignment and I have a scale for marking these based on the music document that was done in the States (USA) with Howard Gardner and you assess different things and then you comment on it and the boys look at the same ideas for their process and so they evaluate their use of time, how difficult it was, whether they thought they learnt any skills... their enjoyment and so while it is on a one to ten scale they assess the end.*
>
> *Tim: Assessment… now that is an interesting word… assessment… in my mind I make value judgements… but I have a genuine belief that I can't tell what is good. I know what I value and I hope I elevate kids at some stage… but I don't record anything ...ever. At the end of an activity I set up an art gallery in the room. That*

means all the kids put their stuff out on the desks and we say we are going to the art gallery and that all the students can talk about their art. I tell the kids that they can choose to say nothing about someone's work, but they are not allowed to say anything negative. You have to work out something positive to say or say nothing at all. I encourage the children to make personal collections of artworks and many of them have bought the black plastic folders like I have.

Kay: For assessment the children in year 5 and 6 keep a process diary. They are mainly marked on effort. They get house point stamps and some of those are for administrative stuff like keeping on task and showing their parents. I also get them to do self-evaluation. These are based on process… things like time management, the amount they have pushed or extended them, risk-taking, degree of difficulty and enjoyment. They do an assessment and then I also evaluate things like effort, use of media and appropriateness. Year six have an assessment page. They assess all their work they do. They mark out of 10 or out of 5. Children have the criteria and they do this both in class and as homework. The children I find are very tough on themselves. It is quite holistic intuitive sort of judgement I guess and of course we always assess through exhibition and critique. [162]

14 Risk-takers and rebels

Quilts were made not only as utilitarian pieces but also because they offered
women a medium of self-expression.
(Laury 1970: 8)

14.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the accomplished teachers' approaches to curriculum implementation and teaching. It reflects on the values these teachers hold and the way these were enacted in the classroom. The accomplished teachers are revealed as flexible practitioners who value risk-taking and uncertainty.

14.2 *I'm not sure how we are going to get there…* Flexibility.

A key characteristic the accomplished teachers visited in schools all possessed was an ability to be flexible and adaptable in their teaching. The teachers adjusted rapidly to spontaneous situations to create interesting and meaningful art lessons for the children.

> It is an unseasonably cold day, in this beachside suburb. The lesson I was going to see was to be about autumn leaves but at the last minute the teacher has changed it to a thing on hibernating as she thought the children would want to feel snug inside and comforted on a day like this. It was also too wet to go outside and collect autumn leaves.[163]

The accomplished teachers adopted experimental models of teaching. They tried things and tested ideas in an initiatory way. They reflected on these experiments, adapting their

teaching style and content accordingly. This adventurous approach to teaching appeared spontaneous and unplanned, but more correctly represented an inquiry method of teaching, based on flexibility of choices governed by sound evaluation practices. Freedman (1998) argues that curriculum is still often conceptualised as if students learn in a sequential manner, from lesson to lesson. Freedman suggests that it is what students learn outside the carefully planned lessons that may be the most important aspect of art education. The accomplished teachers were ready to abandon any preconceived plan and move with the spontaneous, and as Freedman contends, more valuable art learning opportunities that arise.

> *I think it is about being flexible and ready to change… in the middle of something. Ehh. I don't know… spontaneity. Being able to change.*[164]

> *Creativity is exactly that. It is about being flexible and generating ideas.*[165]

> *I'm not sure how we are going to get there* (a reference to the likely success of the art teaching I am about to see*) … I'm usually good at logistics and all that… but today… Oh well! We will just have to see what happens.*[166]

14.3 *This is going to be a bit chaotic. I never really know what I am doing* … Risk taking.

One of the most highly rated attributes that the critical friends group felt an accomplished primary art teacher possessed was being a risk-taker. The accomplished teachers themselves were adventurous and not frightened of failure.

> *I think there are too many generalist teachers particularly who have this fear of what art involves. I can't sing for nuts… I shouldn't even try, but I used to think up great music lessons and I don't know whether they were great or not but I would be singing and exposing the kids to just as wider range of things as I could.*[167]

> *This is going to be a bit chaotic. I never really know what I am doing and it is even worse at the moment as I was away last week.*[168]

The critical friends felt that fear of risk-taking and failure prevents many generalist teachers from becoming effective art educators. The critical friends group saw quality art teaching as being based on risk-taking. Until teachers adopt an adventurous spirit free from the constraints of guaranteed success they cannot be successful art educators. The accomplished art teachers saw loss of control as being fundamental to the creative process by allowing students to gain ownership of the art making process.

> *For many teachers I think it is a control issue. They are not confident to experiment. A lot of people say they are not confident with art. That's a threat to their control over what is happening. I think that it is a form of fear and with that fear, they are not going to take a step into art.*[169]

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Sometimes you will find a teacher doesn't want to do something that they are not certain about. They do not want to fail in front of the kids.[170]

It is confidence to make mistakes and not worry. It doesn't matter. Risk taking.[171]

In art there are no recipes and there is no structure.[172]

Uncertainty surrounds quality art practice and the accomplished teachers felt that this uncertainly engendered fear amongst generalist teachers and this fear prevented many teachers from taking risks. It was the opinion of the critical friends that generalist teachers tended to revert to more directed type of craft activities where uncertainty could be minimised. This in turn impacted on the children's learning in art, as the generalist teacher wanted certainty and readymade type artworks. This lead to a situation where the children become worried about taking risks or being different.

Teachers need to just take a few risks and see what happens. The kids can't take the risks because the teacher can't take the risk in the first place. So to try and remove that fear of whatever it might be lack of control, of knowing, of not knowing, or not feeling confident.[173]

The accomplished teachers exhibited risk-taking strategies in relation to their teaching and valued risk-taking behaviours as an important attribute children acquired through quality art lessons. The teachers felt that the children gain risk-taking strategies by imitating models of risk-taking exemplified by the teacher. To this extent, the accomplished art teachers deliberately showed children failure and emphasised the need to be experimental and pursue unknown outcomes. Being considered an expert was seen to limit risk-taking attributes, and so the accomplished teachers deliberately down-played their skills and knowledge in front of the children.

Basically, I work with primary school kids and fiddle around with things they are doing and encourage them to take things further to explore beyond the lesson. You need to model risk-taking. So you say, I don't know if this is going to work. I've never done this before. And also see that you can make a mistake and that is OK.[174]

The accomplished teachers encouraged the children to take risks and allowed them to make mistakes. '*Letting go'* of control and being confident to let the children make mistakes was important part of giving children ownership of their creative processes. Repeatedly while observing the classes, the accomplished art teachers encouraged the children to take risks and reassured them that it was acceptable to make mistakes.

If you make a mistake you can change it. I'm sure it won't be a problem… you just have to think differently.[175]

Be brave Arman… you can do this. Yours is very different from everyone else's, but it is looking really good. You have picked out important pieces and it is looking really good…. There is nothing wrong with that … it is looking really good. Get into it with the textas and have a go. It's your work and you can't be wrong. You can do it that way.[176]

I try to get the kids to do their own thing. Even if they make a mistake I let them do it and then they learn for next time. We always talk about our art when it is finished and the children are often then quite reflective and insightful about things they have done, and then they will fix it up for the next time.[177]

Aligned to this approach was the emphasis given to process over product. The teachers, if necessary, actively devalued the artwork in an attempt to engage the child more fully in the creative and imaginative process.

> *It* (the child's artwork) *can go in the bin at the end of it and doesn't matter you don't need to go through this frantic where's the eraser so they know to start off with that it is OK to make mistakes and it is so relaxing. It doesn't matter. Charcoal is good like that. Not precious, can't be erased, frees children up. You are going to make a mess. Have a good time and we learn something of what we are doing.*[178]

14.4   The new syllabus lies unopened in a box on the floor… Curriculum rebels.

The accomplished art teachers did not follow syllabus guidelines. They considered external directions to be largely irrelevant to the realities of teaching art effectively in the classroom. Yet this did not imply that the teachers approached programming in a haphazard manner. On the contrary, the accomplished art teachers appeared to act as responsible curriculum decision-makers. They clearly planned opportunities for the children to learn art in a sequenced and systematic manner. This was based on their experience and inherent understandings of what they see as being worthwhile areas of study.

> *I think syllabuses are getting better, but people don't really look at them.*[179]

> *I would say I am an intuitive teacher. Curriculum guidelines are an intrusion.*[180]

> *The latest document is too complex on one hand, and while I like the idea of combining the arts, the rest is all sort of aimed at the lowest common denominator. But then I haven't really looked at it.*[181]

> Kay talks about her disappointment with its content and is especially shocked by the poor quality of children's art presented in this document. She is angry that a new document that has been so long in the making is so shallow. She speaks critically of the lowering of expectations in the document and the poor standard of work samples presented.

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The new syllabus lies unopened in a box on the floor.[182]

I find the outcomes and indicators in the new syllabus not really useful. To be honest, I haven't really looked at the new syllabus. I got so cheesed off with it when I was working for the Board that in the end I thought if you are not going to change this it is just not relevant to teachers.[183]

While the accomplished art teachers admitted that *they* do not use the syllabus, they contended that the syllabus should be useful to novice or inexperienced art teachers. The critical friends group felt that the current syllabus lacked sufficient structure and guidance to be of any real assistance to teachers who lacked confidence or the ability to teach art effectively. The complexity of the syllabus documentation was considered to further disenfranchise incompetent teachers by being inaccessible and not practical to the realities of the classroom context.

I think one problem with the new syllabus is that now less people are doing art because I know at my school, they all feel that they are not going to do it right, so they just don't do it.[184]

What is missing from the syllabus is a sense of scope and sequence. What skills should a kindergarten child know? That is what teachers want to know. I have third class children what should I be doing. That sort of thing.[185]

The teachers tended to make curriculum decisions not on the basis of current research or syllabus trends but rather on an eclectic collection of beliefs formed on the basis of what seemed to be successful in the classroom. This approach to curricula tended to have a neutralising effect on the impact of various research trends. The accomplished teachers appeared to accommodate apparent contradictions in research into an eclectic model of what *works*. In this way the critical friends generated personal and practical theories about the composition of effective curriculum. This was apparent in the way the accomplished teachers dealt with the conflicting demands of postmodernism and modernism in developing curriculum. The teachers felt a strong need to teach the formalist elements and principles of design to children and yet at the same time, they valued postmodernist conceptions such as appropriation, framing and layering, and these coexisted in the program without the teachers seeing this as a contradiction. This was evident in the following excerpt of conversation from one of the critical friends meetings.

Critical friends story

Jill: I also think it is a pity that the syllabus does not address the elements and principles of art. Shape and line and stuff.

> *Jan: Actually it was interesting. I was talking to a teacher the other day and she was saying for years she hasn't done that but now she is going back through the elements of design and she said I started off with line and chose artworks that worked in really well, she is on year 6 teaching art and she is just so excited by what they (the children) are doing. A couple of elements in kindergarten a few more in primary…*
>
> *Jill: I don't think that is in the new syllabus though (laughter from the group). I'm probably not supposed to say that.*
>
> *Sophie: No. But I did write that in capital letters on the draft. They (elements of design) are just so important.*
>
> *Tracey: It is criminal that it (the elements and principles of design) is not included in the syllabus.*
>
> *Ann: I have them (the elements and principles of design) on the top of my board and we use them all the time for art appreciation. Whatever stage we are using them through a lesson. I say let's look at those elements. Let's use them in our art making. Yesterday we did an example like how the elements are every where in the world.*
>
> *Sophie: We might be in a minority but for people who are generalist teachers, that is who this document is aimed for as well, if they don't have (the elements and principles) that is when they get scared about teaching.*
>
> *Ann: Like it (the syllabus) says something like, "look at the shapes and colours in something" but it is not prescriptive enough… like what shapes and colours? What are we looking for?*[186]

Rather than recoiling from the complexities of teaching art due to uncertainty related to the syllabus, the critical friends celebrated that they do not feel tied down to a precise curriculum. They expressed the view that teachers should be able to generate ideas and not be tied to one sequence or someone else's ideas. They liked a level of uncertainty in relation to art curriculum. The critical friends appeared proud of the fact that they were rebels and challenge the authority of those who try to impose rigid programming structures upon them. This was apparent in Jim and Jan's story, where there is a clear undertone of pride in challenging of authority.

Tim and Jan's story

> Tim: *I got in trouble at a staff meeting the other day. I had a dig at programming. I am really disturbed by that whole idea of uniformity. Learning should be the first step to something not the end. Look at the idea of outcomes. It is rubbish. It is real lowest common denominator stuff. It devalues the teacher and it devalues all that the teacher brings to the learning process. It is about taking the teacher out of learning. Ironically, outcomes are more about the teacher than about learning. It is a really big thing. I have always had a problem with programming. My boss*

> *said, "well programming is important in case you get run over by a bus on the way to school and someone has to take your class" well what a load of crap is that… don't get me wrong… we have a great boss here… but what does that say about teachers? It is the soul and passion a teacher brings to the learning process that is so important. That can't be captured in a program. I would like to think that if someone replaced me they would bring themselves and their ideas into the role… if they can't bring anything for the children and they can just implement my ideas… what is the point? It just devalues things and we should fight against these sorts of structures.*
>
> Jan*: I will tell you what… I was up at this interdistrict creative arts council meeting that I go along to where we assess people who are going to be coming into the school, art, craft, drama or whatever. And there was supervisor so and so and all these other people anyway they were all talking about outcomes and how limiting they are. And I said, "Well I don't even write anything like that down!" And there was a shocked sigh and jaws went down. And I just responded that you can't assess what I am doing… I am being creative…I haven't got time to write all that down on silly bits of paper. I mean I sit down and write a few things and then I go off on a tangent, I get a different idea and then, you know.*[187]

The accomplished teachers appeared to possess a repertoire of concrete, aesthetic and personal experiences that meant that programming was almost automatic. Their ideas, beliefs, opinions and associations were so innate that they found these difficult to articulate, but were encapsulated in the types of curricula the teachers developed. As Elliott (1989: 88) notes the "theories employed are non-specialised everyday conceptions embedded in the relevant forms of practice." A point to be mentioned here, was that while these were everyday aesthetic conceptions for the accomplished art teachers, they acknowledged that for most generalists, these were not automatic conceptions and inexperienced generalists required far more support and assistance with curriculum development than they are currently receiving.

> *I usually have a rough idea of what I am going to do. Like I knew I would like to concentrate in Australian artists. And I think of a few ideas but then it just grows from there. I wanted to concentrate on light and dark. Tints and shades.* [188]

> *I set all the program and then I head off in exactly the opposite direction.*[189]

Despite the teachers' comments, the teacher's seemed to have a clear idea of future directions and learning strategies. The teachers possessed sequenced, although often brief, program overviews and keep detailed daily records.

> *I have to write a daybook because I always change what I am doing. I plan to do the same thing, but then I can't help it …I always change things… I mean the techniques are the same… and I know I am focusing on colour… but I change subject matter and often see some interesting exhibition or something and then I change everything. And I keep photos and samples of*

other girls' work. I do this major plan… We have to do a program… but I only sort of stick loosely to it. I don't really use the syllabus… Its more just things around. Like at the moment all the Archibald stuff. Portraits… I think we will paint portraits. But then I try to get the girls into other media too. Like I would really like to try jewellery. They get bored with painting. I usually like to start the year with something fun… something expressive. When they start they mix great puddings of colour and they work without thinking.[190]

A rough teaching plan of no more than a page has been written out for the term. I sense that this typed page was for my benefit. I get the impression that the real planning is embedded in Jill's head.[191]

The teachers enjoyed inventing art activities and sequenced tasks based around themes of study. Within the critical friends group, they were able to generate quality art learning based around any theme. They spoke of having to work with the theme suggestions of other teachers and managed to accommodate these demands with the personal interests of the teachers or the children.

I always in the holidays work everything out exactly what I want to do and then as soon as I get to school someone will say I'm doing shelter this term and so then we do shelter. Or when there is a good art exhibition (at the Art Gallery of NSW) we are all going to do Cézanne. I had everything ready to go, everything programmed and then it gradually got whittled away, with me trying to find a little bit if time for (laughter from the group) So for example <someone calls out 'Cézanne and shelter. What about his buildings?' > (The group laughs). So I do a lot with them so like year 6, I knew they were going to Canberra so I focused on what they would see at the National Gallery. Year 2 have been doing shelter so I have been running ideas past the teacher. I will work with the teachers if they ask me to integrate a theme. Some teachers like to do their own thing including their own art related to what they are doing in class so I work independently of them. But a lot will say I want you to. And others will say "I'm doing electricity can you give me a few things for electricity." That's basically interior decorating. They wanted pictures of light bulbs! You could do electricity in Antarctica (the group laugh).[192]

On the basis of the combination of the teacher's inherent knowledge and the children's experience, the teachers developed flexible programs that acknowledged the importance of context and operated effectively within the constraints of institutional issues such as available time, space and resources. As Grauer (1999: 20) notes, art teachers are as likely to "ignore a curriculum as embrace it depending on whether it corresponds to their own particular vision of what content is appropriate for art education." May (1989: 143) also contends that a teacher's curriculum knowledge is "grounded in experience, its legitimacy determined by how well ideas make practical sense and 'work' in the context of school." That appeared to be the case with the accomplished art teachers in this study.

I actually start with a program, K-6 with everything worked out. Look at your program supposedly. But I do follow the pattern I guess. I am basically doing the elements of design this term and next term it is looking at the subjects artists use. There are 1000 ideas there. Then we go of and do shapes and away we go. It all happens within a structure . It is not structureless though.[193]

I sort of make it up as I go a long there is no way that I could sort of do a program for art. I will program everything else. But for art I never have… I have second class every Friday and often I don't know what I am doing until I walk in the room and then I sort of take a few of my big helpers and I get them to race around and get all the stuff, just before as the kids are having news for 10 minutes just before I ran around and get whatever I have decided to use…sometimes I think I should be more prepared.[194]

14.5 *All around us.. everywhere.. constantly…* **Getting ideas.**

The accomplished art teachers demonstrated a remarkable ability to be able to get ideas for teaching units and programs. While not using the syllabus, they obtained ideas from almost every other source! All types of situations and resources become catalysts for planning the learning and teaching that was going to occur in the classroom.

All around us… everywhere... constantly. Some of them come from topical issues. Like I am going to be doing some work on the Olympics this year. [195]

I mean for me the ideas just keep popping into my head! My problem is I have too many ideas and not enough time![196]

The accomplished art teachers were great collectors and gathered resources that may be useful at some future point. Most of the teachers had effective mechanisms for organising these resources, such as storage boxes or folders dedicated to themes or ideas. For other teachers, there were just huge piles of accumulated material in the corner of storerooms and the classroom. The teachers appeared to be constantly looking for resources, and I noticed on several occasions while the teachers were covering desks with newspaper to prevent paint stains, they paused and saw a good image or article in the newspapers and tore these out and added them to their collections! I also found myself seeing things after I had left the accomplished teacher's school and thinking "That bowl would be great for Ann's Japanese art unit" or "I must send a copy of that image to Jill for her Olympics unit!" The children in the class were also infected by the collecting bug and brought in resources for the teachers to use in their lessons. Jan's story was typical of many of the accomplished teachers I visited.

Jan's story

> *I really get ideas from everywhere. I pick up things from magazines and newspapers. I have these cardboard folders and I get a bit of an idea of the sort of thing I would like to do. For instance I thought I would like to chairs next term. So then I just start finding things. Anything at all really that might give me ideas or that I might be able to use with the children. And then as I gather things I just shove them into this folder. Then over time I discard things as I go. Then before each term I have a clearer idea of what I will do. I then make displays of resources on cardboard and get these laminated. They then become the resource for the unit. I tend to always base things on art appreciation. I do lots of that. Sometimes we will have lessons where we just look at and talk about ideas. Things always go for more than one lesson. I've travelled a lot and that helps to. I am always looking for things everywhere. And the kids and parents are great. I mean look at all these bags on my desk. That is all stuff that children and parents just bring in. I never have to ask… things just come in.*
>
> *I might gather… um at the moment I am looking through newspapers for athletic type pictures and I will use those in the classroom for the children to get ideas for figure drawing from … some might trace them, some might sketch from them… I ask the children to collect resources as well… art pictures off the web or photocopy and enlarge those. I will get a lot of art works from the library and the librarian will help me look for those. And I also get a few examples from other places. So wherever we get the ideas from. Images tend to trigger off ideas for me.*
>
> *I've already started collecting (resources). I am a real hoarder. I find interesting things in op shops or somewhere and then that triggers off some ideas and away we go. Sometimes it is from looking in artbooks or going to the gallery. Or I start thinking about where I want to go to and then I sort of just work to it. [197]*

Planning tended to be largely based upon the teacher's personal interest, topics current at the time (such as the Olympics theme), visiting exhibitions or the children's interest. Gooding-Brown (1999: 2) contends that what is taught largely reflects teacher's interest and ideology. This seemed to be the case with the accomplished art teachers. The accomplished art teachers selected content, planned the way it was taught, mediated the teaching of the content and assessed children's learning and reflected on the value of the teaching unit. May (1993: 58) sees this, as a valuable role that art teachers play, ensuring that children's art learning is valuable and memorable.

While the teachers seemed to reference books and exhibitions as a source of ideas, they also readily adapted these ideas to accommodate ideas from the children or new learning that emerged. They spoke of finding it hard to write programs and pre-plan as they constantly modified what they taught. They got bored with repetition and felt the need to continually revise and adapt what they are doing to make it relevant and meaningful to both themselves and the children. Marion's story typified this approach.

Marion's story

> *I look in books, mainly art books. Looking at artworks really helps me to think up ideas. I am supposed to work in alignment with what the other art teacher is doing, and we will get together and plan something and it all looks good on paper, and then I get bored or the kids come up with different or better ideas and so I end up changing. I never repeat things from one year to the next, but I do take lots of photographs of the children's work. I develop these photos into themes like 'celebrations', 'the environment' and 'settlement'... stuff like that. I organise them into albums that are really like little flick books because when I am looking for an idea I will sit with these and flick through them and that triggers off something in my mind. I never repeat things because I get bored, but it might trigger a new idea, or I might develop it into a new idea with different media or subject matter or by changing the idea. I will also think about the media the children have used. If there are some they haven't done or really want to do I might base a unit around that. Like kindergarten hasn't done anything about fabric this year, so I thought I'd try something on that with them. I also ask the kids what they would like to do. I think it is important, particularly with the 6th graders to give them the chance to direct their own art learning, because this is really their last chance to before high school. This year a lot want to do things with wood, so I will probably go with something along those lines. The older kids also like to revisit something that they may have done before. I also make these little ideas notes. I have folders where I collect things and jot down ideas on future art themes. I don't always use them but they are useful. Like I have a few on my desk going at the moment like one on toys, time, magic. That sort of thing. I like to jot ideas down when I think of them.[198]*

The main source of ideas for the majority of the accomplished art teachers was visiting galleries. In particular, they accessed large state and regional galleries. The accomplished art teachers gained information about upcoming shows or visiting exhibitions and then gathered associated resources and planned a unit of work to accompany the exhibition. Sometimes the focus was on the form or technique apparent in the exhibition, for example, portrait painting, while at other times, the units of work focused on the artist or subject matter, such as Matisse.

> *To get my ideas, I start by seeing what exhibitions are coming up at the Art Gallery (of NSW). When Cézanne was on I just went berserk* (the other critical friends say '*I think we all did*' and the group laughed). *I am just so passionate about art that I normally start thinking up my favourite artist. So I say I love Matisse and we are going to do this that and something else and then in branches off.[199]*

> *I am a fanatical gallery visitor.[200]*

> *I have no intention of making a program and are really only visiting the gallery because I want to but when I am there, things just jump out and then I find I can't stop thinking and there is my next term's program! I always like to start with drawing and then things sort of grow out from there. Other times I start with where I think I am heading with the children ... like a large abstract painting, and then I think about all the steps that might be needed to get them there. I sort of deconstruct it.[201]*

Aligned with the teacher visiting exhibitions, the accomplished art teachers often took their classes to an exhibition and used this as a motivation point for getting the children to develop ideas for teaching and learning programs.

> *We went to art express yesterday* (a show of senior students' work at the Art Gallery of New South Wales). *I took all the year fives. It was wonderful.*[202]

The financial constraints and geographical isolation of some of the schools made it difficult for several of the accomplished teachers to take the children into the galleries. In these instances, the classrooms became the galleries! The walls were covered with large art prints and there were abundant art books and other visual resources provided for the children. These resources often belonged to the teacher. The images were large and of a high reproduction quality.

> At the front of the room there is a Shay Docking art book, art posters and lots of other books on aliens. I learn that theme for all the term's work is aliens and that this was chosen because of its double meanings… a space alien and the way we can feel alien or be treated as alien. [203]

> In a prime position is a large poster that has just arrived from the Art Gallery of NSW. It is an Aboriginal landscape. [204]

In the case of Jan, her class looked like a gallery and she used drama and narrative stories to encourage the children to imagine this gallery experience in a sensual manner.

Jan's story

> *When we get the gallery we will walk up the stairs (Jan dramatises during the description). We will put our bags in a special basket, then we will walk past this sculpture (shows pictures) and you will get a chance to see some of these pictures we have studied… like remember the Colin Lanceley we looked at last week… you will be really surprised when you see this one in real life. It is big and the colours are beautiful (Jan shows another print of the same work but has different colours, because of print) You see how even 2 different prints can make a work look different, but you wait until you see the real thing… Oh it takes your breath away.* The teacher and children talk about the difference between real and printed versions of artworks. Children share their experiences of this with the teachers, and the teacher relates her Jan shares her experience of meeting Colin Lanceley with the children*; He is a really nice man, so interesting.*[205]

While the majority of the accomplished teachers nominated artworks and collecting visual resources as the main source for ideas, the teachers also seemed to readily adapt these ideas in response to the needs and interests of the students. The teachers modified a task or tried a new task in response to ideas suggested by the children. Eisner (1998: 208) terms this

adaptive teaching as teachers "mediating their teaching artistically". During the school visits it was apparent that the teachers readily adapted any pre-planned program to make it relevant and appropriate to the students.

Some teachers also reported getting ideas from watching other teachers and attending professional workshops. One of the values credited to teacher inservice education by the accomplished art teachers was that they felt they learnt new ideas and fresh approaches by seeing what other teachers were doing and exchanging conversations about art learning. This was apparent even in the context of the critical friends groups, where the teachers would bring along materials to show one another and resources to share with the group. This aspect of the research community that developed is still continuing, despite the cessation of the formal part of the research and my leadership of it.

> *I also get great ideas from the courses I go to (professional development courses). I also go to all the HSC art exhibitions.* (The group agree with *'yes, yes they are wonderful'*).[206]

14.6 *We will always talk about art …* Making and appreciating.

All the accomplished teachers combined both art making and art appreciation into their teaching but the percent of time allocated to art appreciation varied markedly. Some teachers said that appreciating art only accounted for about 5% or less of their teaching time, while for other teachers, appreciation was about 60% of art time. On average the teachers said they spend about 20% on art appreciation and the rest of the time on making. The school visits tended to support a figure close to the average, though with perhaps slightly more time spent on appreciation than most of the teachers estimated. During lesson observations it appeared that about 30% of lesson time was spent on art appreciation. The diversity in the amount of time each teacher spent on art appreciation was exemplified in the vicissitude apparent in the following comments made during the critical friends meetings:

> *I would probably spend about 75% on art making and about 25% on the study of art.*[207]

> *I think it would be close to 50-50 because I have a 2/3 composite and we do a lot of art but um the kids haven't been exposed to art much from when they were young and so we do a far bit of art appreciation and the kids really love it. You know you hear them walk along the corridor, and like we are doing Salvador Dali at the moment and this kid found a tiny picture of Salvador Dali in a magazine and the kids are just so enthused they just come in and even if they write about it in their journals or tell something for news, so you are always thinking about it so it is*

probably 50-50 but we always talk about it, paintings and drawings and the kids will go off and do some on their own (some art appreciation).[208]

I would do about 20% art appreciation but it is intermittent [209]

I probably only do fairly minor stuff with them in art appreciation, but you will see the kids talking about art in the playground…and in the library. They do talk about the ways of representing things and they like certain artists.[210]

The majority of the teachers saw their role as being primarily concerned with studio making activities. With the exception of two teachers, the rest of the accomplished teachers spent the majority of their art time on studio-based tasks. Hickey (1999: 24) contends that the, "teaching of art history and criticism/appreciation has proved to be a less than successful part of the art curriculum in both primary and secondary schools." This did not appear to be the case in relation to the accomplished art teachers. They clearly valued art appreciation, but it could be argued that this was given less emphasis than art making. Speck (1999: 79) isolates five main areas that children need to develop. These include perceptual skills, material usage skills, design skills, inventive skills and art talk skills. The critical friends tended to support these aims in the way they balanced making and appreciating in the classroom. Appreciating was perceived to directly enhance the making process. It was considered that through art appreciation, the children developed perceptual skills and aesthetic language skills. These skills were enacted through making art and it was through direct manipulation of the materials that material usage skills, design skills and inventive skills were developed. In this way art making and art appreciation were symbiotic. Art appreciation was also valued as a way to encourage the children to view their work more critically and reflectively.

When we are painting or if we finish a painting we will always talk about art so it is hard to sort of separate them because we will then do a bit of closer study… you know like getting them to look in detail at what we have been talking about. [211]

The accomplished teachers felt that art appreciation contributed to building the child's general education and enhancing their historical and cultural understandings. Art appreciation skills were particularly valued for children in lower socio-economic situations where the perception was that through art these children would have equity of access to 'high culture' and a form of communication that was socially valuable. As stated previously, the accomplished art teachers were passionate gallery goers themselves, and art

appreciation was seen as one way to entice children into the wonders of galleries and art, and to initiate them into a passion that will last throughout their lives.

> *I think it is great to get kids to look at their own work and other artist's work. There was a whole group of 9 year olds I had… about 27 in the group I had last year... and I took them to the Art gallery and they said that the best excursion they had ever had, ever was to the gallery and they really meant it and all the parents were just so pleased that the children got an opportunity to do this. So like people were saying in the first place, they will remember that. And all those kids were looking at the art and talking about it amongst themselves. And at 8 or 9 years old they absolutely love art.[212]*

> *Well I remember one new parent said to me that, "my son didn't know anything about art. I didn't know the name of one artist and now we have all been to the Art Gallery (of NSW). The whole family has now started going several times… I mean it is wonderful...[213]*

Many of the specialist teachers within the critical friends group claimed that the limited amount of time they have with classes restricted the amount of art appreciation they could complete. It was generally felt that generalists have an advantage as they can incorporate art appreciation into a number of other curriculum areas. This was apparent during the class visits, where classrooms were full of artworks used across the curriculum in a range of diverse ways.

> *And you can do it in other subject areas. Like in maths, Escher always comes up. I bought this huge Escher book and so all the kids were bringing in things and saying oh that tessellates… so it comes up incidentally, but I have found that doing Aboriginal art you have to spend a lot of time, because it is the stories behind the art that seems to take up the time… but the kids love it and if you are going to give several examples, it might be a story for each example. [214]*

The accomplished teachers felt that young children were capable of detailed discussion of artworks and high levels of understanding in relation to art appreciation. During the nine school visits, I observed the teachers using a diverse range of artworks as the basis for art appreciation. Teachers chose challenging works and used questioning to engage the students with the works. The teachers made the assumption that all children were capable of responding to complex works if they were introduced and presented in the right manner. This was exemplified in Tim's Aboriginal totems that he had completed with his class of *'slow learner[215]'* year six students. The totem poles were a visual response to the art appreciation study completed with the children exploring issues of postmodernism and identity.

Tim's story

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In the back of the room there are a collection of Aboriginal style totem poles made from long painted cardboard tubes. Tim explains that these are part of their study of identity. He shows how they have a postmodern insert in each totem where kitsch objects symbolic of European culture are inserted in (and changed). The poles are placed around the school in a moving display and Tim hopes they will get the other children in the school talking and thinking about some of the ideas associated with reconciliation and the degradation of the Aboriginal culture in Australia. Tim says the totems have been painted by groups of kids, whenever they finish their other work. *You find kids do the postmodern appropriation thing intuitively. They use art all the time all over the place and they love it passionately. Appropriation and multiple meanings are part of the process. They should be in the document (syllabus).* [216]

14.7 *I always start a lesson looking at artwork…* Modelling.

Trent and Cohen's study of good teachers as referred to in the work of Dahllof (1991: 111) identifies a number of key features exhibited by accomplished teachers. These include clarity of explanation and interpretation, a positive and encouraging attitude to the class, stimulation of student interest and motivation, attention to and interest in student learning and general enthusiasm. These characteristics were apparent in the accomplished art teachers I observed. The accomplished art teachers made extensive use of models as a way to explain techniques, aid interpretation, stimulate motivation and involve the students. In particular, samples of students' works were used as these not only acted as a model but to also provided positive examples to give the children a sense that their art was valued and important. In this way, they modelled both an attitude and a technique. As far as possible, children's artwork were used as the model and the teachers kept extensive photographic records of children's artwork that they used to model activities.

> *I actually use the children's art to teach. I find that the kids work is more interesting than mine is anyway. I like to try and keep samples of the kids' artworks. I'll take a picture.*[217]

Marion's story typified of the extensive use made of children's artwork as technical, motivational and attitudinal models.

Marion's story

Marion has heaps of photographs of previous students' works and she uses these all the time with the students. There is a camera sitting on Marion's desk ready to take photos if someone does some interesting work. She shows children's examples from other classes. She talks through examples, asking children questions and pointing out interesting parts of the work…*Notice how they use different brushstrokes to create texture. This work is based on Dubuffet's cow. Notice the use of colour and the way different brushstrokes are being used. Look how they have left some white*

space between colours. Colours need a little breathing space. (The children go
'wow' when they see the artwork).

*While it is good for children to see and talk about artists' work, it is really
empowering for them to see and critique work done by previous kids the
same age as themselves. They see that other kids their own age can do stuff
and that makes them think… well I can do that too. It really builds their
confidence. I take lots of photos and I photocopy kids drawings all the time.
It is one thing if the kids think that an artist did something it is another if
they think someone else their own age did an artwork. It is really
empowering.*

The accomplished art teachers encouraged the children to refer to other children's work
during the course of the making process and also to reflect on their work in relation to the
work of others. This characteristic of teaching was similar to artists' collective approaches
to studio practice where artists work alongside one another being mutually inspired by the
presence of other creative workers. The teachers noted that sometimes using the children's
work as models could be disadvantageous if only a few pieces of work were referred to, the
other children in the class tended to emulate the stereotype of those particular works and
originality was lost. To counteract this, the teachers consciously selected numerous and
varying examples to show. Works were also shown for only a few minutes and then
removed to avoid children copying the subject matter or type of a work. This issue was
reflected upon in Marion's story.

Marion's story

Marion holds up one work. *I don't hold up paintings because they are the best. I
love the patterning… that is in her style… so you don't have to do that if you don't
want to … experiment with colour… That's beautiful… a variety of paintbrushes…
if you have a mistake just paint over it… that's the wonderful thing about paint.
Have a look at Angie's (*Work is held up and the class all 'ooh' and 'ah' at the quality
of the work… and it really is breath takingly beautiful) Marion moves around the
class giving a mix of generalised praise and specific help to individuals. Marion
dashes around the class helping individual children and the holding examples up.
*Look at Jacqui's she has made a decision about her work and what she has decided
works well. You don't have to do what I suggest. You make your own decisions
instead.* A special tube of gold paint is taken out of the teacher's desk. *Don't forget
to use thin and thick brushes. Seek advice from other children if you are not sure
what to do. You can use this gold if you want to … but use it sparingly.* The wall is
filled with attractively mounted examples of the children's work. These are also all
around the school on any available notice board. Art books are displayed on stands
at the front of the room and there is also a notice board Marion calls the 'gallery'.

> *I'll show the whole class. Walking around. Holding things up. Children's work.*
> *Flash. flash..flash.. "How about adding a little depth?" or "Do you need another*
> *line?" Bright colours, screen-prints, These were not realistic colours.* [218]

Artists' works were used as additional models by all the accomplished art teachers observed. They commenced their lessons with a period of directed discussion and observation of artworks. The teachers also referred children to artworks throughout the lesson, particularly if the child was lacking inspiration or ideas or if the child needed to develop a technique. Copying from artworks and using artworks as models was a significant aspect of all the lessons observed. Often artworks by recognised artists were displayed and discussed in conjunction with the artworks completed by children. In this way, the teachers placed the children's art on the same continuum as the work of recognised artists.

> There is a collection of well-mounted art works displayed around the room. *I*
> *always start a lesson looking at artwork and talking about artists' works. I started*
> *by showing Van Gogh's art first. We looked at lots of different paintings and talked*
> *about lines he did. We talked about the places he painted. Keep looking at the*
> *children's examples on display and the other source material provided. Come out*
> *and look and get ideas. These works will be mounted and labelled 'inspired by' not*
> *'copied'... the ideas just got us going.* [219]

The teachers brought as much art as possible into their classrooms and took the children to galleries. Most classes had visited the Art Gallery of NSW at least once in the year, and some classes had gone to the gallery several times in the year. The accomplished art teachers also took their classes to regional galleries.

> *I try to always take children to see exhibitions at galleries.*[220]

In addition to the work of artists and samples of other children's work, the accomplished teachers provided an enormous amount of other visual material that acted as models for the children's work. The accomplished art teachers were avid collectors and gathered a number of resources prior to starting a theme or series of activities. These resources were attractively displayed throughout the classroom to motivate the students' art making. They included photographs, magazine or newspaper images, books, stories, cultural objects, natural objects, videos, computer resources, poems and music.

> There are artworks, pictorial instructions, photographs, and photocopies of previous
> year's work and actual items on the table that the children are encouraged to
> reference as they work.[221]

The accomplished art teachers did not provide model examples of their work to the children. While they may briefly demonstrate a technique or show safety procedures, these were for demonstrating a process, not a product, and were discarded as soon as the demonstration was over. The teachers felt the children tended to copy teacher examples, resulting in thirty quite similar products which was not what the teachers wanted. By contrast, the accomplished teachers created artwork at the same time as the class was working. This was not considered to be demonstrating or modelling, but rather sharing the art experience with the children. I did not observe any teachers doing this, but many of the teachers reported making artwork alongside the children as often as possible. I think this may not have occurred when I visited because the teachers were trying to balance their teaching while commenting to me and so did not have time to draw or paint because of my presence.

> *Sometimes I demonstrate and sometimes I don't. If I demonstrate, it won't be complete. I'll just do a quick little thing. No longer than 5 minutes.*[222]

> *I usually try and sit down and do my own artwork while the kids are working. They love it and will come out and watch me or ask me things and stuff. I really like it.*[223]

Tim showed the distinction between modelling and copying. This related to the desire the teachers had to promote work that was original and individual.

Tim's story

> *Do you remember when we painted the large portraits? What artist did we model these on?* (Matisse) *What does it mean to model an artwork?* (same design… but not exactly copied) *Brilliant answer. We are going to create stories of our own special places and journeys in our life and we are going to model them on the illustrations in this book. I have also brought along some of my previous students' work.* Tim has photo collections and samples of previous children's work. Work samples are attractively mounted and used as the model to explain to the children the techniques for the lesson. *. If you would like to look at more art examples first, stay behind and we will look at art and talk through some ideas.* A group stay behind and look through books and art prints and the samples of artwork from previous children. During this time the teacher explains techniques and questions children about their ideas.
>
> Tim shows me some other works done in preparation for viewing the Archibald Prize. He will take the children on an excursion to the city to see these works. I am also shown large plastic sleeve books that Tim uses to keep all the children's paintings and art work. He always asks a few children if he can keep one of their paintings. *The kids feel really proud having their works kept.* Tim uses these as a resource in his teaching. [224]

14.8   *I always start any program with lots of drawing…* Scope and sequence.

According to Speck (1999: 80) scope and sequence refers to, "the practice of teachers structuring art activities so children will engage in increasingly complex art activities as they progress through the curriculum." Speck (1999; 1999) contends that teachers have largely given up any sort of sequencing in primary art because of the difficulties of trying to deal with the vast array of outcomes and aims in the current art syllabus and the ever increasing assortment of art media and activities. This was not the case with the accomplished art teachers in this study. They all appeared to have a clear sequence in the way they programmed activities and a definite sequence of activities within the context of a single lesson or learning unit. This seemed to be an indicator of accomplishment. They believed that art learning needed to be sequenced. Tracey spoke of feeling she did not have a clear idea of scope and sequence when she first started teaching, but as she became more skilled, she developed more articulated sequences her teaching.

Tracey's story

> *And I found the first year I wasn't sure what to do...to tell you the truth. And so my answer was just to expose them (the children) to as many forms as possible throughout the year… different lesson ideas and all that sort of thing. And that was why I did a bit of this and a bit of that...including different approaches to teaching and um I just discovered by doing that, by chopping and changing. By doing different things it did really turn them onto art (the children) so that was good…and the following year I started teaching children in high school and that was really new and I thought OK. And they (high school teachers) used a lot more sequence and so I decided that I should bring that in with the younger children…. I became more sequenced after I got involved with secondary.*

This quote also indicated the general problem of primary teachers lacking direction in creating sequenced art lessons, especially when they were beginning teachers. The accomplished teachers expressed concern over whether they should be aiming for depth or breadth in the scope and sequence of their programs. While most of the accomplished art teachers opted for exploring things in some degree of depth, they also felt the need to expose children to a range of media and artforms. They particularly spoke of the need to address some new media forms such as computer art and photography with their students. Most of the teachers tended to choose one or two media areas and then focus on these for most of the teaching term. The accomplished teachers felt it was important that children were given a sequence that enabled them to develop substantial skills in a particular form,

but that this needed to be balanced against the needs of the child to express their ideas and feelings through creative art experiences. The pattern of sequencing encountered in the classrooms tended to support Speck's (1999) view of what she terms a depth curriculum. She (Speck 1999: 80) refers to a depth curriculum as being one where, "children will learn perceptual skills, material usage skills, inventive skills, and art talk …regularly, as opposed to sporadically." The accomplished art teachers valued systematic instruction as a way to build children's expressive repertoire and enhance the quality of the artworks created. The sequences the accomplished teachers followed did not emerge from the syllabus nor were they guided by the aims or outcomes specified in syllabus documentation. Instead they were generated by studying artworks, collecting resources, particular elements or principles of design or from the children. This was exemplified in the way Lyn describes her planning process.

Lyn's story

> *I don't read the syllabus. Ideas usually come from literature or HSIE themes or something like that. I mean with the aliens things… that came about from class names. The kids wanted our class to be called "the aliens" and so that started me off and I thought what a really great theme and so many different ways you can read it…. And then a friend of mine brought this great fabric back from a factory in Belmont* (I am shown some fabric printed in bright colours with an alien motif)... *it is a great place with all these terrific kids prints… well that was just perfect so then I decided on ideas to use that. I always try and link things through to literature and stories we are reading. I always start with drawing. Kids need lots of drawing because that is at the heart of most art. I use a lot of art books and stories and stuff. I try to link it with things around the school. From drawing we then move to printing, painting, sculpture, fabric work etc. I really don't believe in writing things down. I might scribble a few points down for the boss, but really it is in my head. I always change and modify ideas anyway so there is not a lot of point writing them down as things always turn out differently from my plans. I do get a lot of ideas from the other stage teachers as well. We all go out for coffee and stuff and the ideas flow and we bounce ideas off each other. I also do stuff for the school play… I love that… backdrops and stuff. Images tend to trigger off ideas for me.[225]*

Interestingly, as none of the accomplished teachers visited followed the syllabus, it may be expected that I would see an enormous diversity in the scope and sequence of what was taught. Yet this was not the case. There were striking similarities between the way each of the teachers sequenced groups of lessons and time within that lesson. There was remarkable congruence within the scope of activities and ideas covered by the accomplished teachers. All the accomplished teachers visited considered that they had developed a unique scope and sequence to match the needs of their class and the teaching

context. They also gathered their ideas for lessons and programs from diverse and eclectic sources, quite independently of each other. From this, I assumed that they have converged towards a certain scope and sequence and as they have each done this individually, it can be presumed that the similarity noted resulted from a mutually discovered effectiveness. This similitude was particularly apparent in the order in which the teachers completed certain activities. For example, when programming a unit of work, all the teachers started with drawing and then moved gradually into painting, printing, electronic art or 3D forms.

> *The teaching units always start from drawing and move to other areas.*[226]

> *I always start any program with lots of drawing.*[227]

> *I start a lot of the units with observational drawing. And then take it out from there.*[228]

The one exception to this sequence was David and Jo who team-teach a kindergarten class and based their art around literacy development. For them, the lessons followed an order based on sounds the children were studying, and painting, drawing and ceramics may appear in any order depending on the artist selected.

> *We start with the very first sound being 'a' is for artists. And we introduce them to the idea of an artist. This is an artist. This is the way they paint. These are some of the things this artist did.*[229]

The teachers observed engaged in sequenced instruction that built a meaningful foundation for the children between what was known and what was to be learnt. Lessons flowed seamlessly from one to the next in a natural progression, with activities usually lasting between three and four lessons and themes or units going for at least ten weeks duration. Within individual lessons there was a logical progression from talking about art through to making art and then returning at the end of the sequence to reflect and converse about the work completed. Throughout the units and within lessons the sequence appeared to be instinctively designed to ensure there was a ready interchange between what the child already knew and can do and what was to be accomplished, understood or learnt. While this sequence was pre-planned, often not in a written form but rather in the head of the individual teacher, the teacher modified the progression and scope of the teaching and learning sequence in response to the achievement of the children and their needs and interests. The accomplished teachers perceived that sequenced learning was very important in art and not comprehensively specified in syllabus documentation.

I think the teachers need lots of simple structures on how to actually approach art. I think you need to sequence the tasks…So they can express but they have got boundaries. So they (children) are not totally overwhelmed, they have some focus of expression, rather than just saying go for it. [230]

The accomplished art teachers rarely did single, 'one-off' type art lessons. Accomplished art teachers tended to teach sets of activities that combined to form a sequence that extended from three to twelve or more lessons in duration. The typical teaching pattern I observed during the school visits commenced with art appreciation, then moved into drawing, then into printing and perhaps painting or mixed media or alternatively into three-Dimensional forms. Even with very young children, artworks were layered over a series of two or three lessons.

I never do just a single, one-off lesson. Most ideas go for 2 or 3 lessons.[231]

I don't aim to get things finished in one lesson. It is better to revisit a work for one or two more lessons.[232]

A lot of primary teachers try to do an art lesson that lasts for half an hour. That is a big mistake. You have to try and build on something. Make the children realise that a piece of art can go much longer than one lesson.[233]

Artworks are never done in one lesson. They go over several weeks and we revisit them building up layers. I don't really do much colour theory with the children… I mean the elements and principles are all there but more just contained within what we do… perhaps though I might start doing a bit more of that.[234]

One of the reasons for having an artwork proceed over several lessons was the shortage of available time. By allowing several lessons to complete a work, the teacher and children felt less time constraints and could complete an artwork at an individual rate. This system was exemplified through Vicki's story.

Vicki's story

Teachers and children do not feel so threatened by art when they know there is no time limit on the end. So we might do one subject (theme) that lasts almost the whole term. We will go over to the next term if we are still not finished, because each part is so sequential that they start off with something quite small and end up with something quite large. We change mediums as we go along and if it is up on the board from the beginning to the end in bits and pieces of work, then they are not threatened as well, because the kids don't have to ask me all the time whee are we going. They can see, "Oh, he did that" or "That is what that person did." The things are all left on the board. I used to just put up the things for that lesson, but I have since learnt that if I leave it all up they can see the progression over the weeks and it frees the children up because they do not have to be on that 'week 3' task or whatever. So they can quickly look up at the board and see where their work is

placed. They know they are heading in the right direction and they don't have to go back and ask for help. So it is easier to get around the classroom more.[235]

Within individual lessons there was a close resemblance to the way the lessons proceeded. In all the classes I visited, the lessons followed the same basic structure, and despite variations in the length of the lesson, the amount of time allocated to each stage of the lesson sequences was in approximately the same ratio. For instance, all the teachers started the lesson with the children sitting on the floor. This occurred regardless of the children's age. During this first stage there was a question and answer discussion based on looking at artworks. The teacher showed a number of images and asked questions encouraging the children to engage in conversations with each other and the teacher about the images or artworks being shown. In all cases, this stage of the lesson accounted for about 30% of the total lesson time. Interestingly, during the critical friends discussions the teachers estimated that they spent between 10-25% of the lesson time on art appreciation, while in practice, they spent longer. Following this stage, there was a relatively brief stage where the teacher explained the skills needed to complete part of an artwork. The explanation may be accompanied by an example (usually derived from another child's work or by showing an example of an artist using the technique), a quick demonstration and checking the children's understanding with a few questions. The explanation of techniques or activity procedures generally lasted for less than 10% of the total lesson time. The next stage involved the children gathering the resources they needed. In some classes this occurred before they actually start making, but in other classes, this stage occurred simultaneously while the children were making their artwork. During the making stage of the lesson, the teacher moved around the class providing individual assistance to children. While this stage largely involved the children working independently, the teachers generally stopped the children briefly during this stage to gain the children's attention. This attention may be directed to looking reflectively at their work or the work of other children, watching a safety or other technical demonstration, and/or pausing to refer to the work of artists. The making stage generally lasted for about 30-40% of the total lesson time. The children usually worked on tables or on the floor when they are making art. The final stage was for cleaning-up and reflection. The children were responsible for cleaning the room and putting away equipment and they were generally fast and capable at doing this. When the room was tidy, the children returned to sit on the floor and the teacher lead a reflective

discussion about the children's work. Generally this involved the children talking about their achievements that lesson or the artwork of other children. It may also include some art appreciation of artists' works or a discussion leading to what the children will be doing in the next part of the learning sequence. The following description of Lyn's class showed the way these stages were enacted in a classroom. Lyn's story revealed the early discussion stage of the lesson.

Lyn's story

The lesson begins with the children sitting on the floor. The teacher speaks quietly showing the children a range of landscape images she likes from the books and posters at the front of the room.

I wonder what the artist was thinking about when she made this painting? The children make lots of useful and highly personal responses. *Artists sometimes have a really clear idea of what they want to do and at other times they sort of start something and then things can happen and it takes on a life of its own. Like you people sometimes say 'I don't like this' and you want to put a painting in the bin. But rather than throwing it away, you can think about it and work on it.. Layer it. Anyway your interpretations are important … I haven't even read what this artist was trying to do. Who thinks they can talk about how this painting was made?* (The children talk about possible medium used) *What lines and shapes can you see? What makes a landscape a landscape?* (The children offer ideas. One boy links it to a landscape page layout on the computer. Lyn then shows a range of landscapes that are 'portrait' layout, and the class talk about why the artist may have chosen that way instead.) *You don't have to follow rules.* Lyn shows a range of other landscapes and the children are very excited and discuss these enthusiastically both amongst themselves and with Lyn. Lyn continues to refer questions back to the children as they ask questions. *Wow how did the artist do these? How do you think? How did they get their ideas? Where do you get your ideas from when you want to make art?* Lyn shows sketches done by the artist and links to how artists work in studios.

I hope you now have lots of ideas going around in your head now, because we are going to do some making. Think about colour… just a few colours… you don't have to use every colour in the pack. (An aside to me: "I went to this inservice the other afternoon and the consultant suggested bundling crayons together with an elastic band so children learn to work selectively with a limited palette.") *That doesn't mean you can't use a little of another colour. I'd rather you don't put words on this artwork. It is a landscape for your alien.*

I have here a box of newspaper shapes. I have torn to give a landscapist feel. We are going to have a lucky dip and that will be the starting point for our alien landscape. You are allowed to swap with anyone else or pick another one out of the box if you do not like the one you first choose. You can use layering or collage whatever. Extra materials are set up on the tables. Press hard with the crayons and use the fatter ones. You may also like to think about crumpling papers and then uncrumpling them. Put lots of glue on and you can layer things over and glue on top as well. I have some glitter glue as well but use that sparingly at the end once you have finished everything else. Layer, overlap and do all that sort of thing.

> *You can talk but you have to do your own work. All the materials you need are on the back table. I want you all to do some crayon work and some painting. You also must use the paper (*magazine torn piece) *the way I have given it to you. You can't cut or tear it or use the back of it. Just paste it on the way I have given it to you. [236]*

Michelle followed the same structure as Lyn, even though she was working with very different media and subject matter with different aged children and teaching context.

<u>Michelle's story</u>

> The children are sitting on the floor at the front of the room. There are two large prints of contrasting interior paintings displayed on the board. Michelle questions the children.
>
> *What things can you see in this work* (It is a large Margaret Olley still life set on a kitchen shelf*)* The children call out lots of ideas and Marion writes them down. The children say both objects and colours. Marion questions the children in relation to both interior and exterior aspects of the work. *Where do you think this painting was done? What time of year was it when this was painted? Where is the light coming from? What can you say about the shadows? We are going to create a picture of a room similar to Margaret Olley's. I would like you to paint the background with the edicol dyes on the table. Try and capture the window and the shelf and the table. You don't need to add details, as we will do that later with crayon when the work is dry. While some of you are painting the background, the others of you are going to come out the front and draw the objects we have here with graphite pencil on the art paper. We will then cut those out and paste them onto our backgrounds. Don't make your drawing too small. Don't do a rush job. Persist with it and you will feel really good about it when you are finished. Go for it artists, Go!! Most of my art lessons are not finished in one go. I usually have about 3 actual art lessons while we talk about things make it and then reflect. Maybe a few of you will finish today or tomorrow. Don't rush it.* The children move back to their desks. The desks are arranged in informal clusters. Some children are finishing self portrait drawings. The children are working in graphite pencils and are working from an enlarged photocopied and grided picture of themselves and a photograph. This idea had been adapted from an art book sitting on Susie's desk and is related to the photorealist portraits of American artist Chuck Close. *The drawing children commence work immediately, while the children whose drawings are already finished (mounted attractively and displayed around the classroom) are about to begin a painting task. The children who will be painting are invited to the back of the room, where, in a well-equipped wet area, Michelle demonstrates some ideas. As she demonstrates the children are informally gathered around her and she questions and chats to the children as she demonstrates. [237]*

14.9 *Let him know who he was and where he fits into the world …* Localised contextualisation of art experiences.

The accomplished teachers related stories of their childhoods in which they described art as a significant aspect that changed the course of their lives, making their lives better and more worthwhile. Similarly, the accomplished teachers felt that children needed artistic

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connections within their local environment. Through the use of local artists and artworks, the teachers hope that the children will make personal connections with art in their lives.

> *I like to choose works that are about the children's local area or have some connection to the kids. Like you know that famous Elioth Gruner painting of the cows. That is actually of Emu Plains. And the kids feel really proud of that. It lets them know their place in the world and that is so important for these kids.[238]*

To achieve a level of connection with the children, the teachers developed extensive networks of contacts with local galleries and artists. This networking became a further resource that the teachers used to enhance art experiences. They arranged for the children to visit local galleries and invited local artists to come into the school to enhance the children's art program. This close connection with local networks was exemplified through a unit of work I watched in Tim's class. Despite his outer western location, he made a number of connections with local galleries, artists and industry to produce a wonderful unit of work centred on the children's experiences of farming and industry in the local area. A particularly interesting aspect of the unit included the study of sculptors who used the stone from the quarry next to the school. The children in Tim's class grow up with the relentless sound of the grinding of the quarry machinery and yet had never seen behind the high walls of the quarry. Tim organised a visit the quarry and then the local regional gallery for the children to view sculptures made from the quarry stone. The children created sculptures from local clay working alongside local sculptors. The unit included a number of aspects encouraging the children to see the artistic heritage and aesthetic aspects of their local environment. The children's artworks and photographs of site visits and other resources were displayed in a continuing exhibition around the classroom. Tim described aspects of this unit.

Tim's story

> *I just love this picture. The Art Gallery is such a wonderful place to go, but we can't afford it here. It is too expensive for the bus for our kids. But we do go to the Lewers gallery at Penrith* (a large regional gallery about 10 kms from the school).
>
> *This was really great. We tied this thing with the HSIE coordinator and the art coordinator and we took the kids to the local quarry. It was amazing. These kids had grown up every day of their lives listening to the grinding away of the quarry and the purr of the machines but none of them had actually seen it. They did brilliant drawings. It was great and then we went to the Lewers gallery… the Lewers family had actually owned the quarry, before they left money to start up a gallery… any way it was great because the gallery has a great exhibition of sculptures made with the stone from the quarry… and so we got our kids to make sculptures from clay that was dug locally. It was a great day and for one boy it*

On a smaller, but not less appealing scale, Rhonda tried to make her young kindergarten class appreciate the aesthetic elements within the playground of the school. Rhonda's school is old and large. The playground is covered by expanses of asphalt which are only broken with the occasional row of wooden lunch benches. But in one corner of the playground there is a wonderful old tree. As we walk past the tree taking the kindergarten children to Rhonda's classroom at the far end of the school, Rhonda pauses as if mesmerised by the beauty of the autumn colours on the grand old tree. Rhonda talks almost to herself while sharing her wonder of the tree's beauty with the children.

Rhonda's story

This is my very favourite tree in the world. Even more favourite than my trees at home. Something very special is happening to this tree. Who can tell me what is different from when they started school and how this tree now looks? <The leaves are falling off> *That is right beautiful. What colours can you see?* <The children say yellow> *What other colours?* <No response>. Rhonda runs out in the rain to grab a leaf that has fallen to the ground. *What colours can you see now? Rhonda directs the children's attention to the small details of colour changes in the leaf. They identify green gold, yellow, orange and brown in the leaf.* Look what happens when the wind blows. <The children get very excited as they see a leaf flutter to the ground and land near the teacher>. *We are going to do an artwork with leaves. We were going to do it today but the weather is too yucky so we will do it next week and hope the day is nice and sunny. Oh what great ideas (Rhonda turns to comment to me) That's what I really like about this job. The kids come up with wonderful spontaneous ideas. I like to run with them if I can. I reckon you could make paper out of leaves. The ancient Egyptians did it…One of the art teachers who used to be here was mad about paper making so somewhere there is all the gear. I'll do some research… look in some books… who could I ask? And I think we might do that. It would be terrific. This is the amazing thing about kids… they just come up with these ideas.* [240]

The tree was not only appreciated for its beauty but also formed the basis for art lessons, where Rhonda encouraged the children to explore their local environment through their art making. Similar localisation of curriculum and contextualisation of learning was apparent in the classrooms of most of the accomplished teachers I visited.

14.10 *Craft is where the kids make 10 things and they are all the same …* **Art or is it craft?**

The definitions of art and craft and the place of each within the school context, caused considerable discussion within the critical friends groups. A range of views existed, from very negative views of the place of craft activities through to those who felt craft was a significant part of primary education. Generally the teachers saw craft as being quite distinct from art, though considerable discussions occurred as to the way one delineates art from craft. The accomplished teachers felt it was important to distinguish between these, claiming that much of what occurred in primary schools under the auspices of 'art' should more accurately be described as 'craft', being overly directed and not original. Several of the teachers pointed to the difficulty of making distinctions between art and craft and tended to favour definitions based more on process and intention than product. This was exemplified in Vicki's definition:

> *With the definition of art and craft, it is a bit arbitrary to label one or the other. I think what we need to say is in craft we do seem to be taking a more domestic slant to it…It is more what you were saying in terms of tradition. But with craft some of it really is unique. There is a lot of true art there and I think the word "craft' has been used too much, particularly in infants school as a gross motor process. The aim of it is more skill development … the fine motor stuff. So you need to almost put that under language or writing or something and use the word 'craft' in its more traditional sense…and then I see it as being very valid.[241]*

Similarly, other accomplished teachers spoke of the difficulty of delineating art and craft but felt it was important in ensuring quality art education that distinctions, particularly in relation to process be made.

> *I always wonder (about what is art and what is craft). I am not really sure myself.[242]*

> *I think you have got to clearly delineate between one and the other and you teach each.[243]*

Generally, the critical friends spoke in derogatory tones about craft. Craft was viewed as inferior to art. This was interesting, as the same accomplished teachers spoke of the positive influence of craft in their lives, particularly craft activities completed as a young child. The attitude was that craft tended to dominate the type of activities completed in primary school and that many teachers equated craft as being art and never engaged in 'real' art activities with the children. This attitude may be linked to the desire the accomplished

teachers expressed about the value of originality, creativity and expressiveness in children's art. The accomplished teachers spoke of craft as counter to these aims of art education.

> *I wish they would not say that. Craft has connotations that are not good. Often... like at that show (craft show). I mean they are works of art. They are! They are! If they were 10 of exactly the same thing then they would be craft. But when they are one-offs they are not craft).[244]*

> *It is (craft) to my way of thinking if they have done it all exactly the same, and are not extending the media.[245]*

> *Craft is where the kids make 10 things and they are all the same.[246]*

Jan spoke of the way craft practices are intrinsic in primary schools. In her view these practices, while very negative, are almost unavoidable but she sees the need for these to be isolated from what is termed art in the primary school.

> *You are never going to do away with the folding and the tearing and the cutting in infants' school but you say to them (teachers) but you can have that but don't call it art and then you have to do art separately and you must do something that is creative in art. You are never going to do away with craft not when it is seen as skill development. But it is cutting and tearing and it can lead to anything.[247]*

The accomplished art teachers felt that craft was widely accepted within the primary school because teachers feel safer teaching something that has a clear pattern and predetermined outcomes. Conversely, art was seen as being more about risk-taking and creativity. Craft was also justified in the primary school as a way through which children acquired fine motor skills. This latter justification was extensively criticised by the critical friends group.

> *I see a pattern where teachers think that if they have done some crap craft they have done art. One of my children once said craft is just skills but art is something creative. I think that was so insightful. Teachers like craft because it is about control… you can organise creativity out of art and out of other things…. A lot of people call craft art and it really disturbs me a lot.[248]*

> *And it is all step-by-step.[249]*

> *Jolly paper patty cake flowers.[250]*

> *Bloody things that all match.[251]*

Many of the accomplished teachers viewed eliminating craft activities from the schools as being one strategy that could greatly enhance art practices in schools. Several teachers spoke with passion and anger about the prevalence of craft in schools and the poor quality of teachers who claim that this is art.

> *I think we shoot everybody who does the same thing. [252]*

The accomplished teachers attributed the high incidence of craft activities in primary school to the prolonged influence of the 1960's and 70's 'art' syllabus (Wales 1952; Education 1972) that had large sections on 'handiwork' and step-by step instructions for activities such as paper skills, basketry and sewing. This syllabus was abandoned in 1974 (Wales 1974) yet the accomplished teachers felt that it still impacts markedly on what teachers call art. Perhaps this related to the idea that teachers teach art largely as they experienced art as children. Three syllabi (Wales 1974; Education 1989; Wales 2000) have occurred since but many teachers in primary school have not adopted the formalist approach of 1974, nor the processes and experiences approach of 1989 nor the disciplined/art appreciation of the current syllabus (Wales 2000).

I thought craft like that went out with the 1960 syllabus?[253]

It hasn't gone, especially in infants' classes. It really is the art program in a lot of schools. (Someone from the group, *"It is revolting")[254]*

Tracey takes a more sympathetic view of why teachers rely on unstructured craft activities. She claimed that craft activities have clear patterns and explanations and are thus easier for teachers without training and confidence to do something that is vaguely artistic. She also sees craft as being part of a larger agenda in schools to limit creativity and risk-taking and to make children and teachers conform.

Tracey's story

> *It is easy for us because we teach that way… but for the people who are frightened and people who have been told, "this is how you must do it" To the point where, for example, I was told this week, that for warm up exercises they will move their right arm here… and I thought are you kidding? All these directions! Why should someone do that? I mean that is a person who has got real control problems. But a lot of people are in positions where they feel they need to tell people how to do things…they do it by stopping them being creative. They do everything to cut out creative opportunities for people and unfortunately there are people like that… plenty of teachers around like that and plenty of people who are in power are like that. I mean they are not going to make me do it, but I can see that a lot of other teachers would think, "I don't want to fight" and so I will just do it. [255]*

14.11 *It is a process that reflects an idea, into something tangible …* Product versus process

Allied to the art/craft debate, was the strong feeling the accomplished teachers expressed that art is about the creative process and risk-taking and experimentation were more

important than achieving an attractive art product. This reflected the criticism the accomplished teachers made of craft as they felt it lacked creative and experimental approaches, being largely about following predetermined instructions. Similarly, the accomplished teachers felt that other teachers who do not have confidence to teach art effectively, rely on ready-made art activities that ensure an effective end product rather than engaging the children the art process.

> *When people don't really understand what they are doing and they get obsessed with the product and I think it is when people feel confident that they actually celebrate the process.* [256]

> *I think a lot of teachers are caught up with this idea of a final product and what I say is that there doesn't have to be a final product.* [257]

Furthermore, the accomplished teacher felt that an over-reliance on producing a high quality end product was detrimental to the children engaging in exploratory and risk-orientated processes.

> *Like you don't publish everything. Not everything has to be a final product. Only the best work goes up on the wall and there are lots of exercises. So the children can take risks because it is not always having to be displayed.* [258]

> *Yes, give a naughty boy a paintbrush! You have to get away from product. It is the process, the experience. The experience is more important than the final product… I went to Tim Gamble the illustrator and he was saying it is really sad when he has a session with kindergarten kids and he says who is good at drawing and every child puts their hands up then he says that to a year five or six and you know, a few hands up. They lose it there might be one child who puts up their hand.* [259]

> *It is a process that reflects an idea, into something tangible. But it doesn't even have to be tangible. That is why that Picasso quote is so perfect. It is exactly what it says. Art is a process. It doesn't have to be finished it is just an idea.* [260]

While all the accomplished art teachers valued process ahead of product, some of the accomplished art teachers stressed the need to emphasise both product and process. These teachers felt that aesthetic products tended to build the profile of art in the school and enhance student motivation.

> *I am really interesting because I absolutely agree with everything you have said but in the teaching situation I am in and the type of school, where everyone is so used to a perfect product that it is really hard. It is hard because the children are so used to that beautiful end product.* [261]

> *I think they have to get and good end result and be pleased with their work. I think results are important for young children.* [262]

The latter comment also indicated the significance of audience in the artistic process. All the accomplished teachers visited had attractive classroom displays of children's artwork. They carefully mounted and displayed the children's work. Generally, except where space limited this, all the students' work was on display. The importance placed on the final work appeared to contradict the accomplished teachers' view on process being more important than product. Yet, it was apparent that the children were engaged in a sustained art making process that continued over several weeks. This process culminated in the resolution of an artwork that the children mounted and displayed. While a few of the accomplished art teachers saw exhibition as being important to the child, the majority viewed exhibition as a way to promote art more widely within the school and community. To this extent, exhibition existed as a way to bring kudos to art and as a tool in the accomplished teachers' campaign to promote the benefits of art to a wider audience.

> *Giving them an audience is important.*[263]

> *I think it is good when the children receive accolades from other people. Not just the art teacher saying, "that is good." But other people recognising what they do.*[264]

> *We enter a lot of competitions and exhibitions so the children receive external rewards. It shows the children that being successful in art can be recognised and receives accolades along with sporty or other academic pursuits.*[265]

> *It is all about promotion (PR) and about being judged.*[266]

14.12 *Think about what you want people to notice…* Knowledge.

Surprisingly, the accomplished teachers spoke only fleetingly about art as a form of knowledge. They spoke extensively about children needing to be aware of the elements and principles of design as a way to enhance both the children's verbal and artistic conversations. Similarly, they stressed the importance of art as a form of literacy and a powerful expressive and communicative tool. They engaged in a range of activities to encourage children to develop visual and verbal vocabularies and exposed the children to artworks from a range of styles and periods to assist the process of building conversations both within art and about art. Furthermore, the accomplished teachers considered art to be a powerful socio-cultural force and a distinct manner in which children place themselves within their local context and more broadly into the context of world issues and history. Yet art as a form of knowledge or understanding was only briefly mentioned by two of the critical friends. One instance was in Jill's class, where she referred surreptitiously to art

being a cognitive activity when she said: '*Think about what you want people to notice*'.[267] This comment implied an innate appreciation by Jill that art exists as a form of cognitive processes, where artistic decisions were made on the basis of knowledge and understanding. Similarly, in Kay's class, Kay questioned the children quietly using structured and leading questions during an art appreciation aspect of the lesson. It was clear that she was guiding the boys in her class to given knowledges that she has about the style of work, but rather than state this knowledge, she used questioning to encourage the boys to initiate the acquisition of this knowledge. When I questioned Kay about the knowledge she felt it was important that the boys learn, her answer reflected more a comment on skills and the elements and principles of design, further exemplifying the view that knowledge in art is only significant related to the communicative process.

> *I do a lot about the elements and principles of design to begin with. It provides a foundation and then I sort of just let them go. There are no absolute techniques, but kids know what they want to achieve, and if you don't give them the tools to achieve their vision, they become very frustrated. I try to always mount the work well and show it to its best advantage. I let the children know that artworks will take more than one week and that layering is really important. I give them knowledge of terminology and skills and let them feel confident to use them.*[268]

It was interesting that both Kay and Jill who in any way acknowledged art as being a form of knowledge have completed Masters degrees, and may have been exposed to these ideas as part of their study. Coincidently, they had both completed this study at the same institution.

14.13 *Art is a special skill. Yeah. Yes. A talent …* Skills.

In common with knowledge, the teachers saw skill acquisition as being another way to enhance a child's ability to communicate through art. It appeared that skills were more highly considered in this process than knowledge as many of the accomplished art teachers spoke of the importance of skills including their own skills as art teachers, skills of prospective art teachers and the skills they teach to the children in their classes. Art was considered to be heavily reliant upon skills. One teacher went so far as to say art is fundamentally a skill.

> *Art is a special skill….Yeah. Yes. A talent.*[269]

The accomplished teachers felt that without specific skill training, the children's expressive powers were significantly curtailed.

> *Good art is about taking kids further. Giving them the skills to build further.*[270]

You also need to do some foundations and skills, so when they want to be creative, to do their own thing, they have the confidence in what they do to take those risks.[271]

The critical friends group were captious of discovery learning approaches in primary art education where teachers used discovery without any specific skill instruction. They considered that sequenced and substantial skill training was needed, and that this ultimately lead to greater expressive and creative quality in children's artwork.

You wouldn't give them a piece of paper and say write. [272]

I don't just say here is the paper here is the paint now go for it. You have given them something. [273]

Key to this belief was the view that through skill development, children learnt the visual grammar and conventions of art and these allowed the children to become confident in visual language and express themselves creatively and expressively through art.

Giving them (children) conventions to experiment with.[274]

It is sort of getting the balance right. Allowing the skills to develop beside creativity, so learning the skills but not so much that they (children) lose the motivation that they had. It is getting that balance right, so that the children are inspired but that they have something to work with. They have the skills to be able to do something. They are not being tied down to creativity, but just getting a balance is difficult because each child is an individual, so teaching everyone in a class situation is really hard.[275]

The accomplished teachers demonstrated fundamental skills to the children. This generally occurred in the lessons observed after the initial discussions of artworks and before the children commenced the making process. It was a relatively short part of the lesson, taking only approximately five minutes. During this time, the teacher showed key techniques to the whole class and demonstrated and safety and other key points during the demonstration. Techniques included use of materials, new approaches to existing media, steps for completing a particular task and/or focusing observations on a particular aspect of the subject matter, such as how to draw details of the eyes in a portrait drawing. During the demonstrations, the children sat informally on the floor and the teacher demonstrated on a sample piece. While demonstrations were generally done prior to the children commencing their art making, if a need became apparent, particularly in relation to safety issues, the teacher would stop the children and demonstrate a technique. Generally technique was taught within the context of the children's general art learning, but occasionally single, one-off lessons may be conducted that focus on technical development. In these instances, the

teacher explained the aim of the lesson and distinguishes them as 'skill development lessons' rather than being creative art lessons.

> *I will often tell children at the beginning of a lesson or at the beginning of doing something. I say to them that this is skills development.*[276]

The other method I observed the accomplished teachers doing to demonstrate skills, was the extensive use of artworks as examples. Children often copied artworks to develop skills, particularly drawing skills. The teachers used artworks in preference to their art feeling that these were more skilful models for the children to emulate.

> Michelle shows a range of images of still lifes by Australian artists. As she shows these examples, she talks to the students about the use of light and shadow. *What do you like about this painting? What is good about it? Tell me about the shading? Come out and show me where the light is coming from in this painting.*[277]

The accomplished teachers observed also encouraged the children to copy from photographs as a way of developing skills and techniques, especially in drawing. Drawing was seen as being the fundamental skill in all art activities and the children were given plenty of practice and individual and group skill training in all aspects of drawing.

> Half the class is working on observational drawing of shells, which were commenced in the last lesson. The other half of the children are going to start pen drawings of fish based on photographs and using stippling and cross-hatching. The children are questioned about the difference between pen and pencil techniques. The children were eager to answer and responded confidently about the differences.[278]

It was felt that gaining the skills to draw led to children having confidence in their ability to art. To this end, emphasis was given to providing children with skills in drawing. Praise and lots of positive reinforcement accompanied demonstrations, instructions and skill development tasks.

> *I give them instructions and lots of praise. I think that is the most important thing. It doesn't matter what they do at least they have done something in which they have pride and then you point out that there are so many artists who do things in different ways so you must be just as famous as they are and they think.. oh yes. I am an artist. Success is really important.*[279]

Another strategy I observed the teachers employing to encourage skill development was making the children return to their work and keep adding and changing things until the work was resolved. When a child brought a seemingly completed artwork to the teacher, the teacher questioned them about aspects of the work and encouraged the child to return to

the piece. In this way, the children were encouraged to refine their skills and develop a critical eye.

> *If a child thinks they are finished, I always encourage them to look again at their work and from different angles. Close up and far away and then make decisions. They often see things that need adding or further work. I do a lot of lessons that lead into one another, but sometimes I do a single one off thing just to break it up a bit.* [280]

> *Did I give you blue? Would you like another colour? You needed to say we needed blue! Later I am going to be giving you crayons and colours and you can add more then. Back here gorgeous* (This is said to a child who thinks she has finished). *You need to add dark tones here if this is a shelf. (Child asks, "Is that good?") Have a look at the painting. Where does the table start? Do you think you might need to add a darker layer over the top? How are you going Justin? Looks good. Good boy. That looks good. A really cool brown, Kylie.* [281]

> *Keep layering your work. Add the pink and green now and then you can highlight it with crayons. You can use any colour. You can use a variety of colours. It is just up to your interpretation. Carl, that is looking good mate. Think about how big your pieces of fruit are going to be. Louise where is the window? Think about it… if the light is hitting here… that will be the white part.* [282]

An interesting point arose as part of a critical friends discussion where the accomplished teachers questioned the long-term impact of skill development activities for children. One of the accomplished teachers commented that children tended to perform at a higher level of skill in specialised and directed art classes, paying attention to the instruction and guidance they have received. However, these same children when drawing outside the context of art lessons or in free drawing tasks, reverted to earlier, more primitive forms of drawing. This teacher reflected that the children do not appear to transfer skills instructions to other artistic contexts, and were thus questioning the value of tuition in skills. It appeared that the children reverted to fixed developmental schema when removed from the art instruction. This issue led to a discussion with four of the other critical friends. Hilary, Tracey, Rhonda and Sophie reflected on the value of skill development.

Hilary, Tracey, Rhonda and Sophie's conversation.

> *Hilary: I think as far as teaching is concerned it is the practical side of things that I have had to come to grips with. I mean I have always had the art there but it is getting children to be able to do it... If we can do it why can't they do it? What is wrong with children's art? Why can't children's artworks be really wonderful? Bright and clean and crisp and all of those things and I thought they (children) really do need to learn some theories so I began teaching the basic colour mixing theory so that they wouldn't always end up brown and so that they would get good crisp colours and (artist) is always really well- organised and I think it is that*

organisation that really gave me ideas and I have been using in the classroom and I think that there are a couple of students (student teachers) *that I have taught over the last few weeks... they didn't really want to but I said to them, "Come into the art room you have to teach an art lesson." And sort of noticing them they have the ideas too but it is sort of getting it to fruition and I think it is the organisation that sort of stumps a lot of them... so if things are a mess and there is paint everywhere and brushes and things are a mess.*

Tracey: Yeah, but I think there are 2 sides to that. When I first started teaching kindergarten... My first time of teaching kindergarten as an art teacher and I was aware of the stages of development and I thought what am I going to do with kindergarten…they can only do scribbles. What am I going to do with them for 1 hour a week and so that really started me thinking. What will I do? I won't be able to do like structured art lessons. And then I started to think, well they are at that stage but I can get them past that stage…I felt it was possible to progress them a bit more and so you might do a step-by-step drawing with them on faces… and the kindy teachers were just astonished at what these little kids could produce because they were usually pretty bad and so she thought that it was a good thing to see that development with kids. When I just took them out the other day to draw the church…to sit them in front… I am big on observational drawing, with kindergarten and with all the classes... just what you can do with all these kids, at that age …just with observational drawing... it is really amazing. I think you don't want to get locked into that way of thinking (that is, thinking about child art theories). Like I was really locked into those when I was starting. But then I just started trialing these things and you can see them progress through... but whether they transfer that or not to say they are doing a story and they just illustrate the story... whether they transfer what they learn in art... I haven't really seen that.

Rhonda: It doesn't (art lessons don't seem to transfer into the children's free drawing, which appear to be more governed by innate development.)

Sophie: I always think that the transfer isn't quite there in the older kids too.

Rhonda: I don't think you can really get over that developmental stage… because although you are saying through your demonstration and they are copying what you are doing (Tracey adds in, No they are not copying me they are drawing from observation) I have found all the time that it amazes me …particularly when I give free choice and I am talking about year 6 kids as well, that in spite of the fact that they have had six years and they have done so much. It is amazing that when they have free choice, they go back to these simple things. (Well how do we overcome this?) I think it is related to the actual stage of development and what they can do without being reminded. [283]

14.14 *Even after a 4-week lesson you will still have some children doing the first thing…* Individual differences.

The accomplished teachers observed teachers focused on individual differences among children. They were particularly aware of the need to allocate time differently according to the needs of the children. They allowed the children to complete tasks at a different pace, realising that some children required more time to create than others. In the majority of the

classes visited, children were working simultaneously on different stages of a project. Art projects continued for several weeks and children worked at any pace within the project framework. Additionally, some teachers let the children work on a number of projects both concurrently and over time. For example, one child was working on a painted piece while another was working on a subsequent sculptural piece. Key to this approach was the belief that children should not be rushed in their creative processes and time needed to be provided for children to adequately pursue the artistic process and ultimate resolution of their artworks. The concurrent working of the class on different projects posed classroom management and logistic issues, but the accomplished art teachers appeared to be able to accommodate the increased demands of working with children individually.

> *Even after a 4-week lesson you will still have some children doing the first thing.*[284]

> *If the children are enjoying it, just keep going with it. Because if you stop them half way through… even if the next thing is exciting, they still want to finish what they are doing.*[285]

The desire to allow the children the individual freedom to complete work was tempered by external restrictions. Specialist teachers particularly felt that lack of time often forced them to tell the children that they must finish their work.

> *Sometimes you have to say, "we have spent long enough on that thing and we just have to move onto the next thing."*[286]

The flexibility inherent in the way accomplished art teachers teach assisted individualisation of curriculum. The accomplished teachers observed adopted a very student-centred focus based on a project-based approach. The children were given overall aims for the term or semester and general instructions and then the children were largely free to pursue a range of projects. Some children elected to work quickly and complete many artworks while others only completed one or two works in the available time. To accompany this process, older children completed art diaries where they kept individual records of their experimentations and results. This approach was exemplified in the description given at a critical friends meeting of the manner in which Tim and Kay organised art learning in their classes. Both these teachers described extensive use of student-driven learning models that allowed children to work at their own pace and on artworks of personal interest.

Tim's story

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> *What I have found works really well is actually get the children to complete a whole unit and having gone through the whole process then go back to the beginning and do it again. The same thing. Because what I realised was with a lot of kids… that we are always doing this and that and not doing something and working through it. And then giving them the chance to have another go at it. And then by the end of that process, they (the children) actually understand the concepts and skills that they didn't understand at the beginning or even half way through and they (the children) just feel so much freedom and an appreciation of what they can do. The second time through and the best of all with this approach, I realised I couldn't do everything I was trying to do, so I had to chop everything in half, basically… I was worried at the time. But a lot of kids really responded to it and I would recommend trying to do that with kids.[287]*

Kay's story

> *We probably work in a similar way. We have special art diaries for the older boys and at the beginning of each term we give them an overview of what is happening for the term. Because we have to finish at the end of each term we can't carry things over from one term to the next. But the boys know that if they take three weeks or 4 weeks to do what was planned for the first one or 2 weeks it doesn't matter, so they may end up with 2 completed works while someone else might end up with 3 or 4. And so it is not as big a problem. We just continue going. Each day they just keep going. Often out of the children's experiences comes to lead you on into the next art. Like we might do some printing today and tomorrow we will take a photograph and extend it from that or a digital thing. And do something with it or even go back and work something over it. I don't know how many people here do art at home, but if you paint a canvas… I mean 6 months later you might paint over the top of it. You can do something else. You have an artwork that can change. Teachers have to know that as much as kids.[288]*

Interestingly, my perception when I visited these classes was of a more teacher-centred approach. The teaching and learning episodes I observed tended to be driven by the teacher and adopting a more typical balance between teacher presentation and student learning. This may be explained by the research procedures themselves. The teachers may have felt that I was interested in seeing them *'teach'* and so adopted a more teacher driven approaches than they ordinarily use.

14.15 *You can teach the same thing and it is always going to be different…* Repeating but never the same.

The accomplished art teachers kept detailed records of art programs they taught and the children's artwork. The most common form of record keeping was extensive albums of photographs of the previous classes' works. All the classrooms I visited had shelves filled with volumes of albums of photographs of students' works. Some teachers organised these into years and topics while other teachers had shoeboxes full of bundles of photographs.

All of the teachers visited used these to look at to get ideas and show the children to give them ideas.   It appears, as Eisner (1992: 612) notes that the "preservation of familiar teaching repertoires provides economy of effort." Interestingly, the teachers kept extensive records of past lessons or programs but said they never repeated things. At times they completed similar lessons or ideas but adapted and changed these as a result of reflection. May (1993: 55) states that accomplished teachers continually refine and adjust curriculum in a way that is sensitive to the realities of teaching diverse learners in diverse contexts. This was apparent in the critical friends group as the teachers developed their curriculum in a cyclical manner, adjusting and modifying activities to meet the needs of their diverse learners. In this way, activities may be repeated but they are never the same as the learners and learning context are different, and thus the activities are modified.

> *And you can go in and teach one lesson and then teach the same lesson and then half way through it, it is a different lesson. You do something better.*[289]

> *I think that is why we can't teach the same lesson. Whether it is year 6 or kindergarten. You can teach the same thing and it is always going to be different.*[290]

> I am shown a range of art activities from previous years that are kept on file for future reference. *I forget what I do so it is really handy to keep copies. It is funny though, because I never do the same thing twice… but I see these and they make me think… that would be a good idea or I can try this and adapt that. I keep files of previous kids' artworks. I keep very detailed programs and I also try and keep albums of what I do. But I never do the same thing again. I always adapt and change things. I like chopping and changing…because I start with all the programmed stuff and then I think of a better idea. So I tend to chuck out the program and do that (the better idea). It keeps me alive.*[291]

> *I adapt them and try them and get some feedback on them. I come back and I change things and I try new things I never repeat things but may adapt ideas to new contexts.* [292]

This final comment shows the teacher's awareness of the need to adapt activities to the context and needs of the learners.

14.16 *I sabotage some things that are very structured* … Structural restrictions.
In Anderson's study (1999:17) he reported that the frustrations American art teachers face were structural rather than to do with art, art learning or children. The teachers in Anderson's study felt the most frustrating part of being an art teacher was bureaucratic limitations such as time, constant interruptions and limited budget. Interestingly, the same frustrations were identified as being the negative part of art teaching by the critical friends

in this research. They saw structural restrictions as the main limitation to quality art programs. Tim's story explained the way structural limitations imposed on his thinking and what he considered important to children's education.

Tim's story

> *Young kids when they start school in kindergarten do wonderful things. Every kid has their own worldview… They are just wonderful… They know their world and their place in it. All this stuff it is all in their heads and then what do we in schools do? We undo it through the structures. Creativity is being squeezed out of education. We need to make schools less comfortable, have less control. You look around this room* (we are in a staff room where there are lots of posters around the room encouraging the teachers to be creative and get children to think). *The teachers and the principal **'say it"** here but all the structures that are in place work against it. I try really hard to work against it. I really try to undo the control aspects. You can take risks. It is good for kids and for teachers. I think there is a real problem with student teachers entering primary schools. One thing is that I feel driven to try and preserve and promote creativity in primary schools, because I think it has been absolutely crushed through the very structure, the promotions of information (the group adds their agreement to these points) The whole thing. The way resources are set out, the people that get promotion…Every structure has been basically moving to restrict creativity and the practical outcome is that creativity is restricted. Like programs…The whole mentality… Things that are valued. You know… I'm not saying good things don't happen, but as a general shift. People are less messy and people are trying desperately to make sure we complete all these things and can tick off the boxes. (Paola adds, 'I think that there are so many demands on the curriculum') It is impossible to complete these things anyway. And unfortunately what happens is that people who have been doing a bit of both (creative and non-creative work) are now doing less of the creative things and some people who have a tendency to go the other way, to negate creativity, have more support for their positions. People with the scientific approach getting more powerful in terms of directions or things.*
>
> *Sometimes I make lots of mess you know and I intentionally don't fix things up and I sabotage some things that are very structured. But it is a battle, a real battle but I know within myself that I am never going to give those things up but I really worry for students.* [293]

All the critical friends saw time as being a major limitation. This problem seemed to cause the most inconvenience for specialist teachers who were often limited to lessons that were shorter than sixty minutes long. The children were frequently brought to their art classes late and this further limited the available time. The tight structure of timetables meant that there was no flexibility to extend lessons and often children were just commencing work when their art time was over and the children had to pack up. The general lack of storage space exacerbated this problem as there was no where to store partially completed works. The teachers reported lack of time as being the major structural restriction they face.

I am sorry guys. I hate to stop you… but we really have to or you will miss the bus. The children are reluctant to stop. … I get so wrapped up in things I am happily making away and then time runs out.[294]

I only get 50 minutes with my students and by the time they have got there it is down to 45 mins. So it is very much a series of orchestrated bits rather than whole lesson. [295]

It becomes so disjointed. There are kids who will be away. Or someone's work will go missing. I've collected up 160 and put them all in their special folders. But there is always someone's work that goes missing… I find it frustrating.[296]

I would like more time in terms of language development and one class over a longer period. Several days instead of having to say goodbye. Being able to work for extended times on a project. Getting to know the children. [297]

It (running out of time) also happens in the classroom too. Like today we were doing some literature then we had to do different comprehension activities all on the same topic. Then we had to design a cover. And some of them finish, some of them don't and so you've got 4 or 5 that haven't finished so you let them have a bit of time tomorrow or the next day, but you (specialists) are not in that situation.[298]

While the accomplished teachers complained of the lack of time allocated to children's learning in art, I observed considerable evidence of enormous time pressures on the teachers themselves. In New South Wales, primary teachers are entitled to two hours per week 'Release from Face-to-Face' (RFF) time per week. The specialist art teachers amongst the nine accomplished teachers I visited did not get this time. They are technically entitled to get RFF, but in practice I did not see this occuring. They taught a large number of classes in a day and coordinated art clubs during the lunch break. They had no assistance preparing art materials and were generally responsible for ordering and managing all the art materials for the school. They often were called upon to undertake additional school responsibilities. Most of the accomplished art teachers, both the specialists and the generalists, organised all the displays around the school, including the classrooms of other teachers. They were frequently expected to arrange special displays in the school and community to coincide with local or school events. They also prepared backdrops, programs and scenery for plays and musicals within the school and community. In addition, I observed the accomplished teachers frequently being asked to give both formal and impromptu professional development to other teachers in the area of art. The specialist art teachers, more so than the generalist teachers visited, seemed to be particularly busy with an extremely heavy workload. Many of the generalist teachers I visited did not take their RFF allocation so that they could teach art lessons in other classes

around the school, work on school exhibitions or assist other teachers with art. Spending a day with any of the nine accomplished art teachers I visited was extremely daunting! They literally ran around the school, never eating lunch and their day started early and went late, but these dedicated teachers did not complain about their comparatively high workload. Rhonda's story was typical of the time pressures the accomplished art teachers face. Rhonda was supposed to only work three days per week. She received no RFF and on her two days off she often came back to the school to mount displays or exhibitions or to clean up the art room.

Rhonda's story

> *I actually find the pressure at times is enormous. Many classroom teachers simply see art as a source of interior decorating. So does the Dept of Education I might add , who will ring me and say we want 30 works quickly for Education Week (*a government initiative to celebrate education and open schools to the public*). It is not just teachers, it is coming from the Dept itself. So they think it is a form of interior decorating. So I find I will have teachers saying to me, "Have you got anything for the back of the room?" and I'll have to say , it wasn't something we were actually doing for exhibition. We are doing another work and making a collage and it is going to take 3 or 4 weeks to be finished… but then it will come to you so there is that other side to it. One is the good side of appreciating what has been made.. The children's work etc, but the other is just that it just becomes something bright to hang on the wall.* [299]

Apart from time pressure, the other structural restriction that caused concern to the critical friends was the lack of funds and resources. They perceived that art was seen by their school as of being of minimal importance and poorly funded. The accomplished teachers I observed though, did not let this inhibit their practice, and many of the teachers used a range of ways to raise additional funds to buy paint, paper and other essentials. Of the nine teachers visited, there was an enormous difference between the levels of funding of art within the schools. At one end of the scale, I visited an affluent private boys' school where the art teacher taught in an immaculate studio with an abundance of high quality resources, while at the other end of the scale, I saw a teacher teaching art in a school where there was no paper or paint. This teacher organised the children to bring in old breakfast cereal boxes that were cut up for the children to paint on. The paint was made by mixing food colours and cornflour paste. Where funding was limited, the teachers felt that this reflected the poor standing of art within society.

> *Companies are investing in sport and not investing in art and culture. This is society as a whole.*[300]

14.17 *I often wish I was the classroom teacher…* **Specialist or generalist.**

The critical friends expressed the view that specialist teachers were better resourced and more able to teach art effectively and efficiently. It was seen that specialist teachers in art were a good option to overcome poor art education practices at the primary level. This view tended to support the findings of the Morrison Inquiry (1974) as reported in Condous (1999: 19) that states that some form of specialist assistance is desirable in primary schools. However, the accomplished art teachers felt that a specialist was frequently seen as being a way other teachers in the school can abdicate their responsibilities to teach art.

The 22 critical friends felt that the ideal way to organise effective art education instruction in primary school was to have generalist teachers who were well-trained in art education and capable of developing exciting and innovative art activities for children. The main advantage cited for the preference for generalist teachers was that the class teacher had a better relationship with the children, time was more flexible and it was easier to teach art related to other aspects of the children's learning such as literature, story writing and history studies. This idea supports Holt's (1995: 253) view that generalist teachers "have the closest of relationships with their pupils… as a result, they are clearly best placed to provide the kind of support that will help children through and beyond this difficult period in their art education." The critical friends considered that specialists were hampered in their ability to develop art lessons integrated with other subjects. The specialists often attempted to bring aspects of other curricula into their art classes but found that the pressure of time limits the possibility of this.

The specialists within the twenty-two critical friends also expressed the view that other staff members devalued what occurred in art classes. It was felt that as long as other teachers received relief time from the students for their sixty minutes, and were given some artworks to 'decorate' the back wall of the classroom, they had no more concerns. The specialist teachers expressed concern that they were 'put upon' by other teachers, often having to work longer hours, get no release time and expected to be on duty at lunchtimes. Those specialist art teachers within the critical friends group who had previously been generalist classroom teachers all felt that being a specialist art teacher was a more difficult job.

There are so many other opportunities that the classroom teacher has that I see, and particularly with literature and we were doing Jeffrey Smart and I don't want to stop but we have to. As I only have them for that limited time and then they have to go back to class.[301]

I often wish I was the classroom teacher because we do things like these great Ned Kelly pictures and I will say to the teacher, you could write great stories about this... or do drama or something, but they never follow it up. I think the other teachers think I am crazy![302]

15 Grabbing a coffee after school

15.1 Introduction

This chapter is entitled "Grabbing a coffee after school" as it reflects on the way the accomplished teachers within the critical friends group speak about continuing professional education and teacher education. It also discusses the accomplished teachers' clear evangelical zeal to promote the cause of art education beyond the confines of the classroom and the standard school day. This chapter also describes the teachers' comments in relation to their own professional growth and development as a result of their involvement in this research.

15.2 My whole world is art … Lifelong learners.

The accomplished teachers observed possessed a passion for art that extended beyond classroom art education. They actively engaged in a number of art-based activities outside the workplace. They attended numerous courses and engaged in a great deal of professional development. Eisner (1995) argues that learning to teach is a lifelong professional activity. This statement was true in relation to the way the selected teachers think and act. The teachers observed gained a sense of personal fulfilment and satisfaction from participating in a range of extra curricula art activities and saw that these had for the benefits for art education or professional enhancement.

My whole world is art appreciation and I borrow books and reading about artists and that whole world and theories of learning and I could really just spend the rest of my life studying all of this.[303]

As soon as I left teachers college I started courses and it didn't matter what they were. They were very varied and so I started off with ceramics at Gymea Tech. I then went to Double Bay and did fashion design and I did that for 2 years... I can't believe I did that now! Then I did a life drawing class and then so... it wasn't like there was development in one particular area it was really anything.[304]

I started when I got the art job and I started doing courses. I would do any courses I could and I also did my upgraded training in the Creative and Practical arts.[305]

Interestingly, the accomplished teachers attributed their passion in art to a passion that began in teaching and before that as part of their undergraduate teacher education.

*My interest came out of a love of teaching. When I went to college I did all the art electives I could and then when I went teaching, when I got out I would do every course that was ever offered... like basketry and copper work... but my love of art came out of craft because I think that is what we were exposed to more. I was always sewing and doing all that sort of thing (*People all agree) *making little things… art is a very hands-on thing and in a strange way you are using colours and textures and things but in a different form so if that is inherent in you... it is easy to transfer that across to art teaching.*[306]

Several of the teachers used retraining and further qualifications as a way of furthering their interest in art.

I had to convert to 4 year trained and I had to decide what area I would do my study in, so creative arts just seemed natural. So I did a degree in that and I loved it, down at Oatley… so then I went on and did my masters in Visual Arts education at COFA. I was still working as a generalist at that stage. But I just loved it and I was taking lunchtime and after school classes and clubs and all that. Once you start with kids they really want to know more.[307]

For the majority of the critical friends, further education in art was not done within the context of formal university courses. These accomplished teachers used art galleries as the main source of further education in art teaching. They visited galleries informally and also attended teacher enrichment and general information courses run by the gallery. They spoke passionately of the important place of art galleries, in particular, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, in developing their knowledge and skills as accomplished art teachers.

*I find the teachers' enrichment days at the Art Gallery of NSW are great. Interestingly I use very few of the lessons or the workshops we do at the gallery, but I find that it is a great stimulus for something else... and it was interesting I was just looking at the notes the other day in my daughter's room and you know I said it is amazing. I haven't done one of these things but like Jeffrey Smart, it gave me just a whole range of ideas that I have been developing other things from (*someone else says, "enriches the soul") *They really are wonderful. They are great.*[308]

I know when I go to an exhibition; I am just so full of ideas.[309]

One of the accomplished art teachers, Fiona, also made her own artwork and she finds that the combination of engaging in drawing classes, making artworks and attending the gallery fuelled her art teaching practices, giving her immense personal satisfaction.

I only want to work 3 days a week because I love doing my own thing as well. I go to pastel drawing classes and I am always off to the gallery.[310]

The teachers spoke of gaining a great deal of collegiality and ideas from attending inservice courses and professional development programs run by the school or local art networks. The accomplished teachers bemoaned reductions in funding that limited the availability of these courses and the support from the school to attend such courses. Yet despite the lack of support financially, the teachers still attended a large number of such courses, either organised at no cost or often paid for by the teachers themselves. They felt that such courses were valuable and that teachers should be encouraged to attend.

> *My main form of learning is inservices. I have done 1000's of them and then experimenting in between lessons with things. I haven't really done a lot of formal courses. And I am still always learning.*[311]

> *As I was teaching I would think I need a little experience in this or that and I did a few workshops along the way so that is where mine come from. It is hard to know where knowledge comes from because I think you can always learn.* [312]

> *Practical workshops are the best sort of professional development. I know myself when I go off to a workshop; it really gets your ideas going. I also know that when I have done workshops with teachers it keeps them going for a little while until they run out and then they need. But often the same teachers just keep coming to them.* [313]

Many of the accomplished teachers in the critical friends group were involved in conducting inservices as well as attending them. Their expertise was recognised within the school and regional education community and they organised inservice education for the teachers at their school and from other schools. They generally did not receive either payment or recognition for this work but viewed it as an important service to other teachers. This was typified in the conversation between Jill, Kay and Sophie that occurred in one of the critical friends sessions.

Jill, Kay's and Sophie's conversation

> *Jill: To take it back to a personal level, we have just been inservicing our staff on the new syllabus and some of the teachers have been absolutely terrified of the actually starting the appraisal work (art appreciation), because they don't know where to start. So just supporting them by throwing props in their direction. Um… showing them the places in the library where they can get resources. Giving them something like steps of art analysis to help them. Give them the structure to do a lesson and like you say the training or inservicing or workshopping is really good and then supporting them all the way and giving them feedback. Again, I was talking to a friend on Friday night and she was really stressed after just giving her first appraisal lesson, and she showed me some of the results she got from the children and talked about how excited they were and she said, "It is so easy. I*

> *didn't realise how easy. It was such fun too." And now she's right. She's fired-up and she will be able to pass that on to other people in the staff room. When they hear about how easy art is and they want to go on and attempt it. So there is a lot of scope.*
>
> *Sophie: I have noticed that you can give them an activity and they (teachers) will do THAT activity. They don't seem to have the ability then to run with it. I mean you (a good art teacher) can just sort of come up with ideas. But that seems to be not the case (with other teachers who don't teach art).*
>
> *Jill: I find that it is useful even just talking to the people in the senior school, cause there are things that they have done, just things like the idea of a body of work in visual arts. They have started to inservice themselves within the specialisations of the different teachers. And so even though all of them are capable of doing a thing, and are very talented, each teacher has an angle from which they teach, and so they are going to inservice each other.*
>
> *Sophie: I think that is really great. Even if they could do it (inservice one another) In a cluster of schools. Teachers working together* (all participants express agreement).[314]

The critical friends spoke of art teaching as being a very isolated profession. They looked forward to meeting with other art teachers in the context of professional education and were keen to engage collegially with other people interested in art. This was evident in the accomplished teachers' involvement in this research. For them, a key aspect of their keenness to be involved was that it provided an opportunity to engage with other art teachers. The critical friends valued the opportunity to have a group of colleagues and enjoyed the meetings as a chance to discuss and reflect with like-minded people. They expressed a desire to continue to meet after the conclusion of the research. They spoke of needing more professional networks and organisations. This was reflected in the conversations of the critical friends.

Kay, Sophie, Tracey, Kerrie and Jill's story.

> *Kay: Art teaching is sometimes a very insular existence and you are the only one at a school. Often you are teaching all the art and the other teachers are not doing any art at all. Well I don't really like that. They see what I do as a specialist and so "a" teacher teaches art, so I don't have to do that.*
>
> *Tracey: Are there any sort of associations where teachers get together. I know they do a lot with literacy where you meet with other teachers in your area. I know in the private system, I've been to other schools.*
>
> *Sophie: The nearest thing to a professional network is Kerry Milne's* (an education officer) *things at the Art Gallery but the thing that concerns me about that as that it is sort of preaching to the converted… like I was speaking to a consultant and he didn't know anything about it. Kerry Milne is fantastic. But they need more practical workshops.*

> *Kerrie: But they need something to every school and out of school time though, as the Art Gallery things are generally Friday and it is hard to get released for them.*
>
> *Sophie: We had a network going for a while but when the consultants came out they sort of took over and changed them into consultant run workshops and it wasn't sort of good. It sort of sagged. The networks we had. Everyone used to bring along something to share. And it fell apart.*
>
> *Jill: The JHSA* (Junior Heads of School Association: A network of independent school teachers) *do a thing a bit like that and it is good. Everyone gets together from 2-4 and most of us stay on after that for a chat.* [315]

Teacher networks played a significant role in the teachers' professional and personal lives. Teacher networks occur in art education in most regions of New South Wales. They were organised by teachers and a typical meeting included a guest speaker, informal resource sharing session, afternoon tea and a chance to meet and chat with other art teachers. Primary and secondary networks generally operated separately. The meetings were conducted in schools or galleries in the teachers' own times. Network meetings operated for both government and independent schools.

> *Those sorts of things do open up your eyes. And art teachers generally work in isolation so having any organisation where you can meet with other professionals really awakens you to new ideas.* [316]

> *I have found that it is a great stimulus for me just coming in contact with other similar minded people... through the Bondi network and we wrote all this fantastic material and it was great... it was this wonderful stimulating environment where everyone was completely over the top with excitement about getting things up and going.* [317]

The accomplished teachers also attended many community art courses. Interestingly, while most of the teachers claimed they were not artists and do not make artworks, all the accomplished art teachers had attended at least one community art making course. Several of the teachers described themselves as compulsive art course attenders, and they attended several each term throughout the year! Art courses run by community art workshops and evening colleges were popular with the accomplished art teachers in the critical friends group.

> *I am right in the middle of finishing a course at the moment. I have done quite a few classes through the Kuring-Gai community art centre and* (artist's name, indistinct on the tape) *a miniaturist has really influenced me and um she is such a fun loving person to work with but she is really an expert. She used to teach a lot of art theory while we were doing our miniatures but also very practical things... like making sure we always have a towel on the table to wipe the brushes.* [318]

I do at least one course a year... usually just community college ones and some of them have just been brilliant. I am also doing a design course that I really love and it is good for me because we are going back to the basics. [319]

The teachers also used art competitions and looking at books as a way to develop their ideas and enhance their professional awareness. This was indicative of the way the accomplished art teachers were active lifelong learners and strived to actively seek new knowledge and skills from a range of places.

I get a lot of ideas from competitions, and I see a lot, like the travelling art shows. You see how the kids use this and that, and it is adapting ideas too. [320]

You just look up in the books of information and see examples of things, and what this was like or that was like and I can always find things. [321]

15.3 *Well every classroom teacher has to be able to teach art…* Teacher Education.

The critical friends expressed considerable concern over the standard of teacher education received by students and the impact this had on the quality of art education in classrooms. This concern was widespread both within the accomplished teachers in the critical friends group and also from their impressions of the views within professional bodies and the schools.

*I have to say that at all the meetings that I have been at for the Board (*Board of Studies of NSW)*, there has been considerable concern expressed about the level of training and teacher education in art for primary. [322]*

The general view was that there was too little time and emphasis given to art education within teacher education programs. The teachers held the perception that there was less art education in current teacher education programs than when they trained and that courses for the preparation of teachers are becoming too theoretical and not addressing the practical skills needed to be effective art teachers. Several of the younger teachers in the critical friends group, whose initial teacher education had been completed at university, said that they received no undergraduate education in art education for young children.

Pre-training is so important because I did a Dip Ed and we basically did nothing. [323]

As all generalist teachers are mandated to teach art at the primary level, the critical friends viewed substantial and high quality teacher education as being vital to the preparation of teachers. While favouring the idea that generalists should teach art in primary schools, the proviso that was placed on this idea was that generalists received substantial training so that

they were capable and confident to teach art education properly. If generalists did not receive adequate training, then specialists with considerable art education preparation should conduct art teaching in primary schools. An interesting aside was that the critical friends felt that current initial degrees in fine arts and art education as a specialisation do not adequately prepare *primary* art teachers. The accomplished art teachers felt that a divide exists between secondary and primary art education and that this needs to be addressed in the types of specialist art courses offered and a greater continuum needed to be established between preschool, primary and secondary art education.

> *Well every classroom teacher has to be able to teach art.*[324]

The teachers referred to the need for initial teacher education to address the students' negative perceptions of art. The critical friends considered that many preservice teachers experienced negative school art experiences and that they took these experiences into the teacher education program. Unless these were fully addressed, particularly with generalist teachers, preservice teachers would remain not keen to teach art in schools and would tend to revert to *'packaged ready answer type of art lessons.'*[325] The critical friends felt that attitudinal change was at the core of effective teacher education.

> *The first thing I always think of when I work with inservicing teachers... You need to get over any negative perceptions they have of art. Because the reality of what often happens is that...they might have had some happy experiences and really liked art and really enjoyed but the experiences they have had during their high school years has not been happy ones… people will say even at the training and development days. That I always liked art but gee I was hopeless at it. Hopeless at it at high school…So that is the very first thing.. the fact that you might have had these very negative experiences does not mean that you can't or that that can't all be changed.*[326]

> *Confidence and a love of art. That is the very first thing.*[327]

Related to the change of attitude, was the feeling among the accomplished art teachers that many novice teachers lacked confidence, and because they feel they are *'no good at art'*[328], they avoid studying or teaching art. To address these problems, preservice students needed specific skills and ideas in which they could feel success. The critical friends felt that the most effective way to gain confidence was through positive attitudinal changes that occurred within the individual as a result of that success.

> *When we were looking at it, we looked closely at the work done by Davis… particularly the development of a 'U-shaped' curve she talked about, in preadolescent and it goes along with what Picasso said, you know, "I could paint like an adult at 5 but it took me 25 years to learn to paint like a 5 year old." That*

is where the top of the 'U's' are ...the professional artist and the child. And the preadolescent, is at the bottom and if you can't get them through that development, that timidity of 'I can't make it look real' if you can't get them through that then they shoot off down the bottom and stay there. You have to pick students up and although we innately knew that, but I think reading her research made it that much clearer... um stronger.[329]

Part of the process of attitudinal change and overcoming students' fear to teach art was about making learning art more fun and enjoyable. The critical friends felt that the more pleasant and engaging art teacher education was, the more likely preservice teachers were to develop positive attitudes to teaching art to children.

But the training and development lesson for staff... the first one I always do is sheer fun and it has to be that.. it has to get them laughing and relaxed, they then have that success and think I can do this and then they are ready to go onto something more challenging.[330]

Allied with this was the feeling expressed by the critical friends that too much emphasis in teacher education was placed on the individual's level of skill in making art, particularly in drawing. The accomplished art teachers described themselves as being generally poor at drawing. Yet this was not seen as being a hindrance to effective art teaching. The accomplished art teachers felt that teacher education needed to focus on the idea that a student does not have to be personally artistic to become an excellent teacher of art. The critical friends contended that if this idea was more fully expanded through teacher education, preservice teachers would feel less inadequate about teaching art.

This is just a comment. I am not an artist but I love teaching art.[331]

You don't have to be and artist to be able to encourage children.[332]

Or the fact that you can't draw. One of the classroom teachers said to me the other day that they can't even draw a stick figure and I said don't be silly. Everyone can draw and be taught to it is just a matter of having a bit of confidence and practice bla bla but anyway having that attitude doesn't mean that you can't teach kids to be able to look at artworks and appreciate them.[333]

I think one of the most important things for all of us, like when you are trying to help those teachers is that if you feel like that, like I can't even draw a stick and that is because someone has said it is different from something that is real. Well art doesn't have to be real. This is what we have to try and get people to understand is that it doesn't have to be like a photograph ...In fact it is better if it is not. It is better to have some feeling that is coming from inside of you. If you can put that on the paper, it is expressive, not a photograph, but beautiful.[334]

Teachers felt that students needed to be trained in artistic perception. The accomplished art teachers saw gallery visits and exposure to artworks as vital to the development of an artistic '*mindset*[335]'. Several of the accomplished teachers felt that this development of visual awareness occurred in gallery contexts but also involved making prospective art teachers visually aware of their environment. As one critical friend commented, effective teacher education needs to be about *'opening the students' eyes and getting them to really see'*[336]

> *An understanding that art is all around them.*[337]

The critical friends also emphasised the importance of art teacher education developing the students' critical conversations about art. The accomplished art teachers felt that it was very important that preservice teachers engaged in sustained and exciting conversations about artworks, artists and art styles. Through these conversations the preservice teachers learnt to ask questions, gain the discourse of the art discipline and develop an aesthetic eye. The critical friends highlighted the need for visual and verbal conversations about art.

> *It is not hard to teach people to look at artworks and to talk about them.*[338]

Associated with the need to develop the students' artistic perception and ability to engage in art discourse, the accomplished art teachers maintained that it was vital that this was accompanied by hands-on, practical skills and ideas. These activities should be aimed at giving the students confidence to develop classroom and resource management skills. It was an imperative that these be addressed in teacher education because the general messiness and difficulty of the practicalities of classroom art teaching was perceived as being one of the limiting factors preventing teachers from teaching art in the primary school. Within the teacher education program, practical activities needed to move from simple to complex. Preservice teachers should be exposed to a range of media so they have some understanding of the classroom applications of these media, without necessarily being personally skilled in using these forms. The idea that art is a very practical and practice-based discipline was highly valued by the critical friends and something that should be reflected in preservice teacher education.

> *How do you expect them to go out and teach ceramics skills if you haven't done them yourself.*[339]

> *Our subject (art) is practical. It is the actual practical, even simple things like washing-up brushes after the lesson. You have to know how to do that. If someone*

had said I would be doing that 4 or 5 times a day… you go through this cleaning-up process and that's this control thing too. Teachers are scared of the mess. They need to be given strategies.[340]

If you give them (student teachers) one example or one skill in their time and then get them to workshop that, how many lessons can come from this? That is really teaching. Come up with 100 ideas from this starting point. Teaching them to see beyond what you have given them.[341]

Interestingly, at post-graduate level or as part of specialist training, several of the accomplished art teachers spoke of the need for more indepth art making experiences. Two of the critical friends group particularly commented about the impact of an artist-in-residence or a lecturer who was an artist in their formation as accomplished art teachers.

The actual lecturers were artists. And they were great... really... those 2 guys...um... they just gave us so much to work on in our art major classes and it just really encouraged us. There were 2 lecturers who had a love of art and were art educators and then they took 2 lecturers for a year who were primarily artists and those 2 guys really showed us a lot and you really learnt nothing else but art. [342]

When I did my masters one of the courses. The lecturer made us do this assignment where we had to produce a major work and we also had to look at the way we work. The process we are going through and all that sort of thing and we also looked at the implications for teaching so you were basically left in the cold to produce these. Well I thought I was left in the cold because I was so used to having all this guidance to correct you and you were left in the cold to come up with this major work and I found it really hard and you had to keep a diary of what you went through and you had to analyse all that um it just made me look at all the factors that affect coming up with an artwork… the time … the money. All these sort of things and I think that whole learning experience was really valuable... It was so valuable to sort of go through all of that... even simple things like listening to music while I paint and so I put music on for the kids. It is all these little things that you need to be able to teach... but I thought it was really valuable to go through that. [343]

One member of the critical friends group was very passionate about the need for teacher education to strongly argue against negative art activities such as craft-based, formula type activities. She felt that teacher education should take a strong stance against these sorts of activities and communicate the inappropriateness of these tasks to preservice teachers.

That is what I wanted to say. I get on my soapbox. The people at uni need to know that there is a big difference between art and craft and if you just get patty pans and make . Everybody makes the same vase. It is so awful. Teachers who aren't arty. Basically they need ideas and they need to have uni hands-on so they can go back and say I want to try that with the kids. To make their confidence greater.[344]

One final comment in relation to teacher education that was emphasised by many of the critical friends group was the need for substantial offerings in postgraduate education in art

and professional education in art. Many of the accomplished art teachers felt that it was only once you start teaching that you really appreciated the importance and value of art in young children's education. At this point high quality teacher education was needed so that teachers could revisit ideas and develop philosophical underpinnings.

> *I think that is why I find it so interesting reading all the stuff I am reading at the moment because it reaffirms, what I am doing… what I have done innately and I find that there is a value in seeing those theories… but I didn't see that value so much when I was at teacher's college… it was really only valuable after some experience. [345]*

15.4 *I'm not really very good at teaching art… just mad…* Questioning of expertise.

While they felt confident in their ability to teach art, the accomplished art teachers within the critical friends group strongly rejected the idea that they are 'expert' or 'accomplished'.

> *It is interesting for you to say that we are the experts and really, literally, I have had no formal training at all and I think that just shows that anybody who is a teacher can have the skills to bring out what is good in kids and do it with art. Or with anything. [346]*

> *I'm not really very good at teaching art… just mad…[347]*

The accomplished teachers argued that they do not have all the answers and often things did not work in relation to their teaching. They actively down-played any perception of themselves as expert feeling that being an expert made them less accessible to the children and other teaching staff.

> *I think it is really good in primary not to be an expert, because it is good for the kids to see you having a go and to have a bit if a laugh. [348]*

> *What you are doing I am doing where I am. And it really makes a big difference. The staff I have actually been working in and we just share ideas. All you have to do is pick one thing in that you have done in art that has ever worked. And it doesn't have to be a big deal or whatever, and people go away several successful ideas that usually they will try and then they are talking about that and then as soon as that is happening a lot more art is taking place and everybody is feeling that they are part of the experiment and there is no expert. It is a sharing thing so … having an art show in the school is good. Something like that where it is not… it is just the kids producing something… it is not a lasting thing… It doesn't have to be… it is not a sort of competition. It is just an opportunity to exhibit some work and everybody just sorts of picks up so much from other people. Rather than the so-called experts. [349]*

From the critical friends discussions and school visits, it seemed that the accomplished teachers displayed a level of achieved expertise. They possessed advanced understandings of structuring children's art education. In latter observations of the teachers in action, they

displayed ingenuity, complexity and highly personalised style in the way they taught. Yet the teachers considered themselves as learners alongside the children and felt that developing accomplishment in teaching art was a passionate, lifelong endeavour.

15.5 *I am always doing things for other people…* **Evangelical zeal.**

The teachers possessed a passion and energy that I can only compare to an intense evangelical zeal. Not only did they work tirelessly to give quality art experiences to their classes but they also saw that it was their role to enculturate all other areas of school, professional and community life with art. They passionately believed that art was vitally important, not only in a child's education but more generally in the world.

> *I see art as a way of changing a worldview.[350]*

As evidence of this, the teachers were busily engaged in a host of additional extra curricula activities. Behind the energy the accomplished teachers put into these additional activities was the belief that they could influence others to believe in the benefits of art education in children's' lives. May's (1993: 58) study found the effective art teachers are:

> Working on curriculum committees, serving as a mentor teacher with student teachers, educating parents about one's program, lobbying for policies or legislation that promotes the arts, team teaching, sharing an idea for an art activity with a classroom teacher, or teaching art in a community centre, mission, summer camps or senior citizen centre.

The accomplished art teachers were engaged in all the activities May noted and many others as well!

> *I have been teaching art for years, as you can tell! I am also working for the Catholic University teaching teachers. Doing the visual arts part for them. I went back to uni and did my masters so I have a masters in art education also. I have done lots of things to do with art. I have my own art gallery… and I have the most beautiful exhibition opening tomorrow and you are all welcome to come. I also teach art privately too. At the moment I work 5 days but next term I will be sharing with someone and only working 3 days.[351]*

> *I did RFF for a year from K-6 and taught art through the school and put on 2 art shows for the whole school and didn't realise how hard it was going to be. There were 420 kids and I framed a piece of art from every child…Oh my God…And I have been working as an art tutor in the year 6 and 7 gifted and talented art camp run through Visual Arts Network North (Vann). I have been doing that for 2 years and I am going to do it again this year and I love it.[352]*

> *I've been there for 1000 years. I started in a hall, but I now have an art room I teach 520 kids a week and it is very fast and furious. I have student (teachers) and get involved in professional development and am getting back into more of that. I*

have an art room.. I fought for it all… There was nothing when I went there. I do RFF and lunchtime clubs and I actually also teach groups of teachers. They come to a lunchtime club now, which I think is a bit of a buzz and I get involved in lots of other art things around the school. The teachers' thing is going really well. Someone said, "I can't paint" and I said OK come along and we will all have a wonderful time.[353]

The accomplished art teachers worked tirelessly for the students. They conducted a number of voluntary, additional art classes for children. In each of the schools I visited, streams of eager students would follow the accomplished teacher! The accomplished teachers appeared to enjoy talking with the children, and the children seemed to view the art teacher as someone slightly different from normal teachers. The children appeared more open and relaxed in the company of the art teachers than at other times around the school. One teacher told me that a child asked her if she wanted to be a real teacher when she grew up![354] The children assumed because they enjoyed art, the teacher too must be having fun, and that seemed to be quite accurate! Jan's story exemplified the enthusiasm and energy the accomplished art teachers give to their interactions with the children. While longer than most of the stories presented in this study, its sheer length accentuated the volume of activities Jan engaged in beyond her classroom teaching duties. It provides a staggering record and testifies to the passion with which Jan approached her teaching.

Jan's story and my diary entries from my visit to Jan's art room.

Some children arrive at the door for a lunchtime art club that Jan coordinates each lunchtime.

You're too early! Go away! Oh they are so keen!

There are over 40 children in the room for the voluntary art club. That is normal. They come in every day. They are mainly girls, but I am told on other days that the group will be mainly boys. The children are all doing their own things. Jan is flitting from one student to the next, helping the child find resources, and providing ideas. In between all this, Jan is grabbing bites of her lunch. The children are doing a range of activities, these include, making clay tea ceremony vessels, looking at art books, making art puzzles writing Japanese poetry on the computer, making a 'dummy' look like a Japanese lady, making a kimono, cutting lino prints, drawing pictures. Another teacher from a neighbouring class is helping. She likes to help as she finds she learns so much watching what Jan does. Jan is literally running around the room helping children. The bell for the end of lunch has gone, but Jan doesn't seem to have noticed. The other class teacher informs Jan that the bell has rung and Jan begins to madly tidy up and prepare for the next lesson. The art club children all help to clean up. Jan reminds them that part of being an artist is having to maintain the studio.

That's fine… I always have a whole host of kids in at lunchtime. And then there are the art club kids. These are a wonderful group of children who put up art displays

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around the room and help me. This year they are going to select work and curate an exhibition of all the children's work. We are also having an arts festival for the whole school.

In the hall, there is a massive display, centred on a huge Hokosai wave created from papier-mache and painted. This area is called the 'gallery' and each term this part of the hallway near the library and principal's office is transformed into a gallery related to something that the children are studying. This term the theme is Japanese art and has been developed to centre the children's interest on a large exhibition of Monet and Japanese art at the National Gallery. It is explained to me, that as soon as Jan starts one of these displays the children get all excited and brings in things from home or make things to add to the display. Some of the school children are Japanese and their parents have made large banners and also translated passages for the display. There is an excellent collection of artefacts which parents and children have lent to the display.

It is amazing but I leave this really precious stuff everywhere, but I have never had anything damaged or missing and I let the children touch things, but they all respect them and really care for it. The display contains a lot of children art samples and every class from K-6 is represented. There is also a display of work, where Jan organised an exchange of artwork between Australia and Japan. *These are the kindergarten children's clay Mount Fujis. And some others have done this calligraphy. We didn't have the real ink so we just had to use paint and it hasn't worked as well as I would have liked. And here are some digital interpretations we have one of Japanese visions of Mt Fuji. That was a bit of fun… It is hard though because we don't often get to use the computer room. I've been trying works with limited palettes with year one. And how do you like these Willow pattern plates… we are going to do a whole dinner set. Look I have found these CD's they are terrific… Japanese music for while we work.*

I am always doing things for other people. I do all the displays around the school even in the teachers' classrooms. And of course I'm involved in the Arts festival and of course the primary teachers' network.

The other teachers see it and because I am hanging it up around the school, they are sort of saying "wow" and that develops their confidence. Because they can see that the kids can do it and they think they could do it too. It is an important PR job.

The walk down the corridor has been an explosion of visual stimuli. There is a display of different types of drawing. There is a huge display of Japanese art. Jan also shows examples to the children of 3D collage and explains to the children the way collage and paint have been used to create the illusions.

I try to get an artist in residence to the school a couple of times a year. Usually it is just people I know. It doesn't cost much and it is great for the children. This year I'm getting a lady I know a printmaker, it will relate well to the Japanese thing.

On the walk down the hall, I am shown sculptures in the Principal's office. [355]

This pattern of extensive extracurriula involvement of the accomplished teachers was evident in all the schools I visited. They felt it was important to not only to teach well, but

to fill the school with art. They were extensively involved in transforming the school into an aesthetic environment with them engaged in constructing a range of displays. In all the schools I visited, there were samples of children's artwork placed on display by the accomplished teacher. Windows, floors, walls and ceilings were all covered in art. These displays changed regularly and the teachers commented that it takes considerable time and effort to update and maintain attractive class displays. This was exemplified in Lyn's teaching where the small rural school was simply bursting with art that the children and Lyn have made.

My notes in Lyn's classroom

> Art is all around the school, and almost all of this is due to Lyn's passion and enthusiasm. The principal admits himself that he is not good at art, but he says Lyn has really inspired the whole school. Lyn has also painted a large school mural. It was decided that the core values of the school would be represented pictorially. Ever child in the school contributed and then Lyn compiled the designs and draw up and coordinated the painting of a large-scale mural. The mural was seen by a local graphic designer and turned into posters that now are displayed in each classroom.[356]

The accomplished teachers were active art resources in the school. They assisted other teachers to write programs and were available to provide lesson or technical ideas and skills for other teachers. This occurred while I was in Jill's class.

In Jill's class

> Jill has now returned from the toilet and the class is waiting patiently. Another teacher has entered the room…
>
> *Have you got a minute Jill? I am wanting to do sketching after lunch. Can you suggest what I can put in my still life?*
>
> What about a soft squashy bag… or one of the boaters or panamas can look great… or a violin would be super… lie it on its side. The teacher recites the advice given and dashes off back to her class. Jill calls the class roll and commences the lesson. Jill comments as an aside to me*; I usually put lesson ideas on the back of the art cards, so if teachers borrow them, they then have a whole lot of activities they could try.* Jill not only teaches her class and runs 3 additional enrichment classes, but she also prepares all the art programs for the other teachers in the school. She receives no additional relief time for these extra activities.[357]

The accomplished art teachers also conducted additional voluntary activities for parents and the broader school community. For example Lyn ran a parents and teachers women's quilting network at the school. The group was supported by the school community and met after school for coffee and to talk and quilt. They were having an exhibition later in the

year. Children were bringing in fabrics to be quilted. The Principal was supportive and saw the quilting network as great for the morale and culture of the school. Similarly, Marion runs after school art classes for parents:

> *A lot of parents can't draw, so I do classes for the parents. Once a year… it is very sad because I can only take 30 but at the end I always make sure they (the parents) do something successful. Then they say wow look what I've done and they value art for their children. Make them aware of art is everywhere.[358]*

As mentioned in previous sections, the accomplished art teachers were active in organising professional development for other teachers and worked energetically for networks and other professional associations.

> *Outside the school I run private gifted and talented art classes after school at other schools. I run workshops for schools, I am very active in the art networks and have done a lot of work for the performing arts unit. I have worked for the Art Gallery of NSW, Board of Studies, Botanic Gardens and Taronga Zoo. And there is a lot of stuff I just do for myself in art. I love going to the Art Gallery and I always go to the Teacher Enrichment days. I am also doing pastel drawing once a week. I am always thinking of writing more art books. I am also doing the gifted and talented camp at Bundanon with Sophie. I just love art. It is my life.[359]*

> *Well we have the VANN (Visual Arts Network North) and the GATS (Gifted and Talented camps) that help to spread a passion for art. And then there are the drama festivals that they are running on the North Shore, for the last 13 years I have been involved in that for a long time, but now we are going to spread into the foyers with art… like did you see the masks we did? Huge big masks we did in the foyer…this is a drama festival, OK? But you have got all the principals, etc who are coming to that and so they see … like these giant masks were such a hit when we had them at UTS. This year we are at the Seymour Centre and now through the district learn about the arts council we're got a star theme just happening. The star thing just happened but I have to decorate the foyer using kids from all over and this is more exposure. Principals will have to sign the papers like they do for the art camps. So at least they will know it is all happening. And there will be principals and you know supervisors and whatever, walking around to the hallway to see the thing at the Seymour Centre and so hopefully it will hit them in the eyes as they walk through, and they (principals) will want it at their school…and slowly it is getting away from the crappy stuff. I hope.[360]*

> *It is only by educating them and you go along to conferences. Like I am going along to the gap conference at the beginning of next term at Kuring-Gai High and I am going to actually talk about art and hopefully a lot of principals will be there… I know our AP (assistant principal) is going who is a bit boring as a teacher. She was a bit like that when she first came… but she is not any more. She was when she first came, but now she gets really excited about things. Now she is doing great big things with charcoal drawings and so you can convert people. Sometimes.[361]*

While the accomplished teachers worked incredibly hard to bring art to the wider school community they often admitted that their efforts are in vain. The accomplished art teachers

I visited frequently took on an extra teaching load receiving limited recognition for the additional work. Other teachers in their schools took advantage of their zeal and the accomplished teachers were at times being inappropriately used by other teachers within the school. The accomplished teachers recognised this but would martyr themselves for the art cause working incredibly hard despite lack of support and encouragement from senior staff and colleagues.

> For other teachers though, art is just something to decorate the back wall or a bit of release time for the teachers while I take their kids. You will notice all the 5th class teachers went out of their way to reschedule their art lessons while the kids are away on camp this week. For them it is not that they are concerned that the children will miss out on the value of art, it is simply that the class teachers don't want to miss out on their release time (I asked if Rhonda got release time, which she is entitled to receive, she laughed and commented that she gets no relief time, and plus is in the art room every lunchtime for art club and has to do playground duty twice, even though she is only at the school for 3 days)[362]

> That's it really. Art is undervalued to many other teachers. They can't see that it is going to help their grades. They can't see that it is going to get them better jobs. Or anything. There is no money to be made out of it.[363]

> Every term I do an art newsletter. It is so important to stress the significance of art to the school community and parents. It's funny though, last time I did one the school didn't even send it out… now what does that say about priorities? But I won't give up… in the newsletter I talk about my philosophy of art and especially how important it is to life. All my ideas keep busting out and I am sure the school just thinks, Michelle get back in your cage, but I won't. I really really want to educate the school and the parents. Art has a shocking profile in education. It lacks funds.[364]

In this section, the last word must go to the children. During the school visits, the teachers were incredibly busy for the entire day. They never ate lunch and had to grab seconds to get to the toilet! A clear impression from my visits was salad rolls with a single bite out of them and cold cups of coffee amongst piles of art on teacher's desks. It was lunchtime during one of the school visits. Eager students rushed into the art room to finish work began this morning.

> "Please miss, can we come in now to finish our work?"

Jan replied as the children rushed into the room and an uneaten sandwich got tossed to the side of the desk.

> I'm really starving… I never get time to eat.[365]

16 Picturing the teachers

Quilting is needed to hold the layers together. The quilting stitch that holds the
two layers of fabric and filling together gives texture to a plain surface.
(Walker 1983: 20).
Frequently the skill of the quilting stitches is more visible on the reversed side
because there is no variation of color or pieces to compete with the viewers'
attention.
(Pellman and Pellman 1984: 11)

16.1 Introduction

The overall impression gained from this research was that while the accomplished teachers
represented diverse backgrounds and experiences in relation to quality art teaching, there
existed a high level of consensus among the views expressed during the critical friends
sessions and the behaviours observed in the school visits. Furthermore, there was
congruence between the stated views and philosophies espoused by the accomplished
teachers and the enacted teaching and learning in the classrooms. The reasons for this may
lie in the exchanges that occurred during the critical friends sessions. The teachers

exchanged ideas freely and readily appropriated ideas from each other, if the teachers perceived a level of applicability to their teaching context. Despite the diversity of teaching roles, levels of training and experience, and differing teaching contexts within the group, the accomplished art teachers possessed a strong commitment to the value of art in society and the desire to transform practice in relation to primary art education. These common beliefs were powerful within the critical friends group.

However, while a high level of consensus and congruence existed within the group, at an individual level the accomplished teachers provided ways of seeing and knowing expert practice in relation to primary art education. The research provided the opportunity to reconstruct and critique a range of conversations and observations surrounding accomplished art teaching. By adopting the role of the critic, I was also able to explore the interplay of the philosophies and experiences of the critical friends with my experiences as a teacher and tertiary art educator. The results of this study suggested that accomplished primary art teachers possessed considerable knowledge, skills and expertise that could inform preservice primary art teacher education. The attributes that became apparent during the analysis of data indicated that accomplished teachers could offer insight into perceptual skills, material usage skills, program design skills, art-talk skills, knowledge of individual needs, and attitudes such as risk-taking, flexibility and lifelong commitments to learning. The teachers supported the importance of links between viewing and making art and the significance of art appreciation. The accomplished teachers believed that art appreciation directly enhances making, perceptual and aesthetic skills. The accomplished teachers supported the direct manipulation of materials as a way of encouraging children to view art more critically and reflectively. The accomplished art teachers viewed art as a way of changing the worldview. They differentiated poorly taught school art, which they saw as having little value, from art education that was a rich experience inducting children into the joys of the art world and its relationship to society.

Given this view of the value of art, the accomplished teachers generally acknowledged that teaching art was complex, and that a single model or theoretical framework that successfully addressed the complexities of the art education terrain would not be likely. The teachers were aware of the multiplicity of theoretical and practical challenges facing primary art education. They raised a number of pedagogical and curricular concerns that

directly impacted on the likely success of preservice teacher education in art. Yet the accomplished teachers viewed preservice primary art education as critical to changing conception of art in schools. Preservice art education poses a number of challenges but it is imperative that systematic and sustained changes are instigated to ensure future graduates enter the teaching profession with quality images of the knowledges, beliefs, skills and practices needed to successfully teach art in the context of New South Wales primary schools. Substantial and high quality teacher education is needed in the preparation of both specialist and generalist art teachers for the primary school. Hamblen (1997) laments that the more art as a discipline progresses and changes, the more art education and preservice training stays the same. Certainly, the accomplished art teachers identified many needs for reform in both school and tertiary art education as reflected in the following discussion of the current situation for art education.

16.2 Current situation

16.2.1 All teachers need to be able to teach art effectively.

The accomplished art teachers believed that quality teaching in art was achievable, but that high quality preservice teacher education is essential if this aim is to be achieved.   The critical friends group spoke of the lack of skills and knowledge of many primary teachers. Allied to this was a lack of confidence and personal ability in art. These combined to mean that many primary teachers opted out of teaching art, while those that continued frequently rely on craft-based formula type art where there was a clear sequence and the activity was controllable. Furthermore, the accomplished art teachers enumerated a number of structural and curriculum challenges that further impacted on the quality of art education in the primary school.   The accomplished teachers felt that a number of structures do not support primary teachers in the classroom and that many teachers do not have the ability to adapt particular pedagogy as a result of structural limitations. The accomplished teachers stated that they often have to teach in less than an ideal way due to lack of resources and time.

16.2.2 The syllabus documentation is seen as alienating and highly political.

The outcomes within the current syllabus (Wales 2000) were seen as being particularly problematic. Generally, the accomplished art teachers felt these were contra to the realities of primary classrooms, reflecting competing educational interests rather than providing

clear guidance and sequence. The outcomes were considered to be vague and lack sufficient detail, and while this level of flexibility was not an issue for the accomplished teachers, they considered this could be problematic for less confident teachers. There appeared to be a contrast in the need for clear structure for beginning teachers, while more accomplished teachers were looking for a more comprehensive and deep syllabus that acknowledged the range of competing influences in art practice. Some of the accomplished art teachers saw conflict as an integral part of art education while others struggled to achieve a level of balance in their teaching, trying to include both making and appreciation while maintaining the positive aspects of a number of competing ideas and approaches.

16.2.3 Increasing the status of generalist teachers in primary schools

While many of the 22 accomplished art teachers in the critical friends group worked as specialists, the overwhelming shared belief within the group was that generalists were best placed to teach art in primary schools. Aligned to this belief, was that generalists must receive adequate training so that they have the knowledge, skills and expertise to effectively execute art activities in the classroom. During the research, I observed outstanding examples of generalist teachers effectively teaching primary art. Equally, the specialists seemed able to produce quality art experiences for the children. As the accomplished teachers comprised a higher proportion of specialist teachers than would be likely in general in primary schools, it could be assumed that there may be a higher standard of teaching among specialist teachers. This could be due to specialist teachers electing to enter this position because they have an interest in art teaching. All of the 22 teachers critical friends group, both specialists and generalists favoured a generalist approach. The teachers cited reasons such as greater flexibility, more able to integrate art across disciplines and more time as the main advantages of generalist teaching. They also felt that generalists have a more intimate knowledge of the children's interests and skills and can therefore construct learning sequences that maximise the chances of pupils achieving high quality art processes and products. This view supports the findings of Holt (1995: 254) in relation to primary art, who contends that generalist teachers "will have a clear understanding of the state and nature of children's enthusiasm." The accomplished teachers reflected on the advantage of the close and continuing relationship generalist teachers have with their class. This personal knowledge was seen as a way to more

accurately individualise instruction and increase the likelihood of the teacher entering learning conversations with the children through meaningful art activities.

While generalists were favoured as an overall approach, the accomplished teachers identified a number of factors that inhibited the likely success of generalists. In particular, the teachers perceived a lack of art experiences of students entering teacher education and the subsequent deficiencies in the duration and depth of art education within teacher education programs. The accomplished art teachers echoed the comments of Eisner (1999: 17)confirming that "we are expecting the teachers to teach what they do not know and often do not love." The accomplished art teachers noted that many preservice teachers and generalist primary teachers have almost no knowledge of art history or aesthetics. The accomplished art teachers bemoaned that many preservice teachers tended to rely on 'ready-made' art lessons and were reluctant to take risks or structure sequenced art programs. Activities preservice teachers completed were often based on following step-by-step school art books with no consideration of the appropriateness of the task to the needs of the child.

16.2.4 Preservice art teacher education

Given these challenges, the accomplished art teachers viewed preservice instruction as vital to setting new agendas in art and raising the standard of primary art education. As Galbraith (1997: 16) notes:

> The preservice classroom is a vital and living place and is influential in shaping how prospective teachers view and implement new and existing art education practices in schools.

The accomplished art teachers thought that current preservice art teacher education has tended to be limited in scope and time, adopting an educationalist rather than art-based approach. Some of the accomplished teachers said they received almost no training while others described a smorgasbord approach, completing a range of isolated tasks across all media. They felt that limited opportunities existed in generalist preservice art education for students to engage in depth with visual experiences, art appreciation and professional art practice. The accomplished art teachers considered that current preservice art teacher education practices tended to stress diversity and exposure rather than depth of understanding. Teachers left these programs still feeling a lack of confidence and unsure of sequential art learning. Consequently, in their classrooms they adopted the role of monitor rather than teacher, providing materials and positive reinforcement, but with limited

consideration of art as a form of learning or communication. The passive role adopted reflected a lack of experience and the influence of a child art pedagogy, where the teachers believed children pass through developmental stages that occur naturally and should not be hindered by intervention (see section 3.6). Key to understanding the needs in relation to teacher education was to delineate the views of art education expressed by the accomplished teachers. While it could be argued that the accomplished teachers presented an idealised view of what should be done in preservice art education, they appeared to hold a relatively clear understanding of the financial and organisational limitations within teacher education, and specifically as related to preservice art education.

16.3 Accomplished teachers' views about art education

16.3.1 An eclectic view of art education

The accomplished teachers drew on historical discourses and selectively chose aspects of a range of philosophical positions and collaged these to form the theoretical underpinnings of their teaching. The accomplished teachers implemented art teaching and learning practices based on mixed models about art and how ideas could be transformed into workable art education practices. In this way, their practices emerged intuitively and the teachers actively rebelled against any scheme, model or sense of closure. In this way, the accomplished teachers appeared to present a postmodern view of education. Yet, many of their beliefs appeared inherently modernist and at times reflected more the manner in which the teachers accommodated pedagogical necessities as they perceived them, rather than striving to challenge a particular dominant discourse or position. Interestingly, postmodernist ideas about art and art education ran side-by-side with more modernist structure in the conversations and practices of the accomplished art teachers. It was clear that formalism had not been abandoned because the teachers felt aspects of modernism still added to the art process and communicative aspects of art.

The accomplished teachers tended to adopt ideas that could be locally defined and interpreted. They actively sought information and new ideas about art and art education and critically assessed this information in terms of the viability of the information for their teaching settings. The teachers appropriated parts of theoretical and historical art discourses only as they befitted their particular teaching context and allowed for quality

processes, rather than as a conscious theoretical framework around which teaching is logically planned. Despite the contextual nature of the beliefs held by the critical friends there were strong similarities in the central beliefs they shared. These collective beliefs served as a filter through which ideas about art education were distilled and applied to their teaching context. The accomplished teachers craved professional networks and the critical friends sessions became a venue where the teachers collaborated and shared information and concerns.

16.3.2 Art has value and is a creative process.

The teachers possessed strong views about art and art education, and while these were rarely overtly stated, they were clearly observable in the teachers' practices. Key to these belief systems was that art education possessed value and purpose in a child's education. In particular, notions of a creative process influenced the way learning experiences were planned for the children. The teachers spoke of actively *'messing things up'* to make both the children and other teachers engage in the creative process. Art education was not viewed as a linear process but rather evolved from the weblike connections that resulted from combining studio production, art appreciation, aesthetic conversations and critical thinking. While creativity was seen as an innate characteristic of certain individuals, the accomplished art teachers felt that perception and creativity could be engendered through particular learning tasks and aesthetic experiences.

16.3.3 Knowledge is inherent.

Creativity was seen as a form of thinking. This view gives rise to an interesting aspect of the accomplished teachers' conversations. It became apparent that creativity was seen fundamentally as a form of cognition, yet this assumption was so widely held by the critical friends group, that they did not directly refer to art as containing knowledge or thinking. While they stressed the skills in art and the need to develop an aesthetic awareness, they did not overtly speak of art as a form of knowing. Interestingly, though, when they were teaching they frequently said comments such as, *"Think about what you are doing[366]"*, *"I want you to really think[367]"* and *"Don't rush, you should stand back and think."[368]* Such comments indicated an assumed level of cognitive engagement.

16.3.4 Individual expression

The other underlying value was evidenced in the classroom practices of the accomplished teachers was that individual expression was pivotal in art education. While such views echoed the child art movement (Cizek 1921; Richardson 1948) (see section 3.6) and art and social justice agendas (see section 3.11) the origins of this belief appeared to be tied to ideas that art must come from the soul of the child and reflect expression, spontaneity and communication. Artistic conversations, both making and appreciating, were seen as a powerful form of literacy (see section 3.10). The accomplished art teachers considered that children needed to become individually literate and feel a sense of ownership over the creative process. Allied to this belief, was the view that craft type activities that encouraged duplicated responses were counter to the values of originality, individualism and creativity and should not be defined as art. This tended to reflect a dominant position of child art (see section 3.6) and expressive (see section 3.7) rationales underlying the teachers' beliefs about art education. While the teachers did not adhere to rigid definitions delineating art and craft, any activity that was purely skills-based or produced identical results was seen as a remnant of the industrial (see section 3.5) rationale for art and the accomplished teachers felt strongly that lessons where children produce identical products based on patterns must be proactively eliminated from primary classrooms and teacher education. Interestingly though, many of the teachers spoke of childhood craft experiences such as sewing and flower craft as significant experiences that led to them developing an interest in art. This raised a number of issues. In particular it signalled, that despite claiming broad, eclectic definitions of art, the accomplished teachers were perpetuating a dominant 'fine arts' discourse (see sections 3.8 and 3.9) that devalued handiwork and feminine crafts within art and privileges dominant European fine arts exemplars. Furthermore, it raised issues in relation to the accomplished teachers' ideas of art within a postmodernist (see section 3.12) context that devalues issues of originality.

16.3.5 Art is a skill.

Once again, in what appeared to be contradictory, the teachers challenged the place of craft-like activities in art education but valued skill. The teachers saw art as highly skill-orientated and so children needed to be inducted into a range of skills across different media. Yet to do this, the teachers adopted the role of facilitator, providing the children with a stimulating environment, varied art media, and creative and imaginative art

activities. They avoided direct instruction, rather encouraging the children to gain skills through a process of guided exploration. Again this view appears to have its origins in the child art movement (Cizek 1921; Richardson 1948) (see section 3.6), but the inclusion of greater instruction and the use of artworks as exemplars showed the influence of discipline-based ideas (Greer 1992) (see sections 3.8 and 3.9). Allied to the achievement of specific art skills, there was strong support for retaining detailed and systematic study of the elements and principles of design. Resulting from modernist art, these concepts were seen to support the child's learning of art communication. The majority of accomplished teachers actively taught the elements and principles of design and strongly bemoaned their omission from the current syllabus (Wales 2000). The accomplished teachers asserted that understanding these basic formal properties of art enhanced the children's ability to think visually in a way that was creative and imaginative. The preservation of these was an example of the way the accomplished teachers retained aspects of previous philosophies if they perceived it enabled more success in the aims of individuality, creativity and instilled value in an art education program.

16.3.6 Process over product.

Associated with the main goals of creativity and individuality was the value placed by the accomplished teachers on process over product. Process was seen as vital to engender creativity and individuality and in all the classes the process bore a remarkable similarity. In each accomplish teacher visited in his/her school, the children were expected to observe, plan, create and reflect upon their work and the work of others. The accomplished teachers observed provided scaffolding problem-solving processes and exposed the children to quality artworks. The process reflected a tacitly held belief in the art as a form of inquiry. Allied to this, the accomplished teachers thought that young children needed to be encouraged to take risks in this process and learn through mistakes. The connection between process and risk-taking featured strongly in the heated debate in the critical friends group about the value of assessment. To many accomplished teachers, the imposition of outcomes-based assessment was an affront to the creative process and the desire to engage students in valuable risk-taking behaviours. Similarly, since individualism of expression was highly valued, any structures such as assessment that served to normalise this learning interaction was strongly opposed by the accomplished teachers. Connected to these issues was the view that art existed as a powerful social force and one of the ways humanity

forges its identity. Given this, the accomplished teachers felt it was therefore an affront to assess a child's identity projected through art.

16.3.7 Art as a social force

As a social force, art was seen as a proactive change agent, capable of allowing the child to form a social position and deal with the complexities of modern society. Art was considered to exist in a broader social context (see section 3.11) and integrate with other creative ways identity is formed such as through literature, music and drama. Transdisciplinary approaches were seen as a way to combine disciplines that deal with cultural identity. Concurrently, the critical friends considered that art served as a communicator of social identity and a mirror for society. At the more radical edge, several of the critical friends considered that art addressed marginalised and oppressed groups within society. While valuing the socially situated conceptions of art, the accomplished teachers saw the role of art education was to encourage children through a range of processes and experiences to form personal and dynamic definitions of art in the context of society.

These beliefs outlined to date in this chapter form the basic ideas that governed the way the critical friends conversed about art education. In addition to these beliefs, a number of personal qualities of the accomplished teachers appeared to have significance for informing the quality of preservice art education. The following section addresses the significant personal characteristics of the accomplished teachers.

16.4 The qualities of accomplished art teachers

Apart from the beliefs held by teachers in relation to art, the other significant aspect with implications for preservice art education was the personal qualities and actions of accomplished teachers. Speck (1999) argues that art teachers have a responsibility to assist children with their image making. Good art teaching is certainly pivotal to this process, but this research indicated that there was not a single entity that was 'accomplished teaching'. Rather accomplishment existed as sets of behaviours, beliefs and actions that worked harmoniously to produce people who reflected high quality art education practices and could be justifiably called accomplished art teachers. There were several key personal traits that emerged during the research. These appeared to be pivotal in accomplishment in art

teachers and combined with espoused ideas and selected theoretical underpinnings to give character to the way accomplished teachers conduct art eduction in primary schools. The importance of these emotional and spiritual attributes underscored the view that no single, teachable model for preservice art education is possible. You cannot legislate or program good teaching. Similarly it would be erroneous to imagine that good teaching could be distilled into sets of isolated criteria. The themes emerging from this research may be used to enhance preservice art education and inform decision making in relation to generalist teacher education. Accomplishment emerged as a relationship between the personal qualities of the teacher, their beliefs, the aims, the children and the teaching context. Allied to this, qualities appeared to be modified dependent on levels of motivation, intrinsic rewards or structural limitations that either engendered accomplishment or served to limit it. Eisner (1999: 658) acknowledges this contingent nature of accomplishment when he states: "We have come to realise that meaning matters and that it is not something that can be imparted from teacher to student. In a sense, all teachers can do is to 'make noises in the environment'". To add support to the view that there was not a single, teachable entity that was accomplished art teaching the critical friends group represented a diversity of backgrounds and levels of training. Some (see section 8.4) had almost no preservice art education while others had completed specialist undergraduate and extensive post-graduate art education. While acknowledging that the critical friends represented a targeted group of accomplished teachers, within the diversity of this group, there was no discernible difference in skill or knowledge level between those with extensive art education and those with little formal training. It could be surmised from this observation that teacher education was therefore of limited impact but I do not believe that to be the case. On the contrary, those with limited formal training had gone to extensive lengths to obtain further education from a range of formal and informal courses. The teachers spoke of the importance of teacher education and were lifelong learners, continuing to gain knowledge and skills as needed for their teaching through a wide variety of sources. The critical friends bemoaned the lack of supported professional development in schools. They organised and participated in a range of learning networks. It appeared that the use of a range of learning opportunities meant that the accomplished teachers could ameliorate the impact of limited preservice art education. The teachers who had received what they considered to be substantial and high quality preservice art education spoke in generally glowing and supportive terms of the way preservice art education had awakened their

interest in art. All the accomplished teachers spoke of generalist primary teachers needing more preservice art education and other strategies to give generalists the same level of training currently available to art teachers in the secondary school sector. The accomplished art teachers argued that more preservice art subjects needed to be available within the undergraduate teaching courses to complement the relatively limited availability of compulsory art subjects and subsequently offered to teachers as post graduate courses and professional education.

The qualities possessed by the accomplished art teachers included: risk-taking behaviours; a rebellion against formal structure; enthusiasm and passion; and a strong interest in art. The most significant of these characteristics appeared to be that all the accomplished teachers were risk-takers.

16.4.1 Risk-takers

The accomplished art teachers did not follow prescribed syllabus guidelines. Instead they saw teaching art as being an adventure. They deliberately took risks and were not afraid of failure. The 22 critical friends often spoke of when *'things went wrong[369]'* and considered that this was vital to high quality art teaching. They were highly flexible and adaptable people. The children were deemed to be central to the learning process and the accomplished art teachers were observed to adjust rapidly and spontaneously to the design and implementation of learning experiences. The accomplished teachers adopted a free and adventurous sprit to teaching and rebelled against constraints or any activity where there was guaranteed success. As they engaged in a high level of risk-taking, they considered it inevitable that things would go wrong, and where this occurred, they adopted a reflective stance, critiquing the process and products and adapting their teaching and learning accordingly. At the more extreme edges of this trait, teachers such as Tim deliberately dismantled structures and forces within the school and system that were seen to constrict risk-taking behaviours for teachers and children.

16.4.2 Rebellion against formal structures

Eisner and Boughton (1996) observed that good teachers bend school and classroom rules to adapt to the realities of their students' lives. In the case of the accomplished art teachers, most of them paid almost no regard to imposed structures, preferring to rely on instinctual models of eclectic practice derived from their experiences and understanding of children.

The teachers were highly responsive to the physical and human context of their teaching. They displayed empathy for students and showed them respect for, and ownership of, their artworks. The teachers' risk-taking character and the contextualisation of teaching become obvious as they struggled with issues of assessment. As a mandated aspect of the syllabus, teachers felt torn between obligations to concord with syllabus rules as a way to legitimise the place of art in the curriculum while feeling that imposed outcomes limited risk-taking, creativity and respect for child as expressive artists. Assessment outcomes were seen to limit diversity and be in opposition to the fundamental values of art education.

The teachers did not formally program. Similarly, May (1989: 152) found that even when teachers were required to write and submit programs, they "rarely followed these plans with fidelity for a variety of legitimate reasons." This was true of the critical friends who tended to gather resource materials and produce web-like program summarises rather than detailed, linear, step-by-step programs. The programs derived largely from the teachers' interests or from ideas generated by the children. The programs innately showed a sensitivity and respect for the children as artists working with a particular cultural context. The content and methods were very flexibly applied and were highly dynamic. Several of the accomplished teachers actively opposed school management and curriculum committees. Others chose to ignore mandates and do as they instinctively felt was right.

Despite the apparent lack of planning, there was clear evidence that the teachers conducted a great deal of long-term planning and gathered supporting resources several months before commencing a teaching unit. The teachers were flexible and adapted their ideas. Many of the accomplished teachers said they did not pre-program but rather wrote detailed reflective notes about their teaching and kept extensive photographic evidence of both successes and failures. A key to the success of this apparently post-planned teaching, was the enthusiasm and passion of the teachers themselves.

16.4.3 Enthusiasm and passion

Mason (1991: 269) contends that "good teachers always have an acting personality or presence that is 'charismatic'". This was observable in the accomplished art teachers. Several of them stood out particularly for the creative, exciting and dramatic way they

taught. Many of the critical friends saw a link between other creative artforms such as drama, music and literature and incorporated these into their teaching.

The accomplished teachers had an intense desire to promote the value of art in society. This was observable as a passion and enthusiasm for art that transcended their lives and was evident in their interactions with the children. They taught with a sense of passion, imagination and a hope that what they are doing was valuable and meaningful to their classes and the broader society. They attempted to spread a passion for art throughout the school and argued fervently for the need to move art to the centre of generalist teaching agendas. This passion was evident in the extensive extra load many of the accomplished teachers embraced and for which they received limited recognition. During the classroom visits the extent of this extracurricular involvement was evident. May (1989: 145) noted similar characteristics in the teachers she studied and comments that: "They must constantly justify the arts to others, promote positive public relations in the school and community, and endure the constraints that do not encumber other teachers." Many of these constraints appeared as a result of the 22 accomplished teachers in the critical friends group perceiving that the school system saw art as peripheral to the main aims of primary education. In this regard, the accomplished art teachers had an inflated 'service' ideal and considered it was their role to change the fringe status of art education.

The dedication, passion and enthusiasm displayed by the accomplished art teachers were often ignored by other staff and senior school management. This was evident in several of the school visits and also during comments made in the critical friends meetings. While many of the accomplished teachers spoke bitterly of this, all of the critical friends saw that the main motivation for their efforts came from the children, not adults. Seeing children '*switch on to art'* was the main intrinsic reward teachers desired and received. Boughton and Eisner found that (1996):

> Good teachers got to know their students very well and used their understanding
> of the students' feelings, thoughts, and life situations outside school to guide
> classroom interactions… a good teacher knows about physical, psychological,
> and social growth and development, understanding children's responses to
> changes in themselves and their worlds.

Similarly, May (1989: 147) notes that it is the, "task -related, classroom-situated outcomes" that teachers find to be, "the most satisfying (part of) their work." This was

certainly manifested in the accomplished art teachers. The joy of inducted children into the art world resulted largely from the teachers' strong and abiding love for art.

16.4.4 Interest in art

All the accomplished art teachers had intense interest in viewing and talking about art. While most of the critical friends group did not make art for either their pleasure or as professionals all the teachers were passionate gallery visitors. They openly admitted, *"I'm not really very good at art… Just mad!"[370]* as they felt that they were not good at making art, but rather had a personal interest in and a passion for art that could be engendered in children. The accomplished teachers often played with a range of materials and art media, but this was motivated by a desire to develop new teaching approaches or ideas, not to produce artworks. They developed art units around a variety of themes, media and subject matter. Their confidence to teach art resulted from a range of hands-on skills the accomplished teachers had developed over time. Generally, what appeared to be pivotal was that critical friends were passionate viewers of art and visiting a range of artworks. These visits seemed to be primarily motivated by the accomplished teachers' desire to develop a depth of conversation with art and an awareness of cultural contexts, art theory and history, and criticism. This interest in art appeared to emanate from early significant visual moments, but was later developed and refined through constantly visiting exhibitions and galleries. This mention of significant early life visual experiences was described in the work of Robinson (1993) who found that "many of the respondents, reflecting on events that took place when they encountered a work of art (and) described it as a process of communication." Inkeeping with the findings of May (1989: 145), "most of the art teachers are genuinely interested in the arts and are sensitive to the marginal status of the arts in schools."

These qualities of the accomplished teachers, together with the views they hold about art and art education combined with issues that existed within the current situation in schools to produce the examples of practice that were noted in the school visits and the models upon which these practices were formed.

16.5 Models of practice

From the outset, the accomplished teachers argued that there could not be a single model that could be used as the basis of art education in primary schools nor for preservice art education. It was their belief that art education closely mirrored the characteristics of art as described by Kissick (1993: 27) who states: "The very nature of art is dynamic, in flux and never fixed, and that is why it has survived as an idea, indeed an essential part of the human community since the dawn of consciousness." Art implies heterogeneity and diversity, and acknowledges that pluralism, variety and difference are inherent characteristics. Given this, the accomplished art teachers reinforced the idea that there could be no single answer, 'best method' or model. While the models observed in practice had a number of characteristics in common, they were not single *things*. A good analogy would be a chair. It serves similar purposes and possesses a number of crucial and similar characteristics but exists simultaneously as many different conceptions and in different locations. For example it can be used to sit on, stand on or as a decorative item. It may be made of wood, plastic, metal and so on. In this way the chair is both an identifiable example, but a multiple concept. In the same way, the accomplished teachers exhibited many identifiable characteristics yet these were altered and enacted through a range of differing goals, conditions, contexts and children's interests. The teachers argued strongly against any idea that would be seen as an answer. While several of the critical friends spoke in wishful terms that it would be good if such a utopian model existed, they recognised that this was impossible as no art education exists stipped of its links to the social , cultural and contextual framework that produced it. In this way art education existed as a dynamic social structure, embedded in the lived experiences of the teachers and children.

Culture and context served to shape and frame art education. A model that may be worthy to one group of teacher may be completely worthless to another. The purpose of this thesis was to propose a catalogue of ideas derived from the accomplished teachers that enabled others reading this work to glean the characteristics of accomplished practice that have most relevance to their situation. This was based on the idea that people can gain insight and enriched understanding by sharing in the vicarious experiences of others, in this case, the accomplished art teachers. In this way, shifting patterns of meaning are inscribed in the context and experiences of the reader. As (Derrida 1987: 24) notes: "Meaning and its

breaks are always reinscribed in an old cloth that must continually, interminably be undone."

Similarly, the accomplished teachers actively opposed any models that might imply a reducationist view of art and art education. They considered that linearity and reductionist programming was opposed to effective teaching practice in art education. During the critical friends sessions, the teachers expressed the view that models often become structures that inhibit creative practice and frequently the values of art become subsumed by a structure that becomes a goal within itself. Hoffner (1954: 56) contends that, "Nothing is more dangerous than a mechanical system which makes it impossible to preserve the life spirit which still lives in the most ancient conditions." Similarly, the accomplished teachers argued that good art teaching was far more than merely a set of rules or skills that individuals could be trained in. The accomplished art teachers favoured approaches based on a coming together of teachers, education students and artists in a sharing of ideas and approaches. They argued that flexible and creative ideas of good art teaching promoted creative teaching. Models should not be singular structures, but rather allow ideas and personal growth to flourish in an atmosphere of tolerance that stimulates creative thinking. The ideas presented should challenge and initiate thinking and provoke preservice teachers and other professionals into action and provide opportunities for construction and interpretation, being adaptable to the environment and experiences of the individual.

It appeared in the accomplished art teachers that there existed certain teaching strategies and combinations of behaviours that were constantly held across the critical friends group and appeared to be successful in a range of contexts. Accomplished teachers appeared to possess a set of ideas, theories and practices that were continually assessed to determine the application and interplay of these in different situations and in response to pluralistic contexts. In this way, these beliefs and practices formed a set accomplished ideals that, as Smith (1993) describes, make sense to us, not absolutely in all times and places but in our own time and place. In this way, ideals of accomplished practice in art education might be quite transient. As May (1993: 55) contends: "I couldn't assume that what I did would be feasible or right for anyone else." Good learning and teaching are inevitably context dependent. Dahllof (1991: 112) argues that, in a given situation, certain strategies and combinations of behaviours and beliefs may be more effective than others, but that these

will be impacted upon by the nature and interest of the students, the phase of the learning cycle, the subject matter, and specific goals of the teacher. This adaptation of successful models of practice was clearly visible in the actions of the accomplished teachers, especially the way their teaching was driven by the interests and desires of the children and the adoption of experiential teaching and learning practices. The teachers made direct links between the children's environment and their art learning, while at the same time presenting provocations and problems that challenged the children to move from their immediate environment and question previously held beliefs and ideals.

Yet within this construction, the accomplished teachers seemed to closely adhere to an interplay of three basic conceptions. I have described these conceptions as *the expressive, the social construction* and *the formalist* approaches. Efland (1995, 28-34] describes art teaching as falling into four main aesthetic theories, that being the "mimetic", "pragmatic", "expressive" and "formalist". He further groups these according to learning theory, with the mimetic and pragmatic being linked to "behaviourism", the expressive to the "psychoanalytic" and the formalist to the "cognitive". He argues that these aesthetic and learning theories interplay to produce an implied ideology that governs the manner in which teachers interpret and implement art curricula. In the case of the accomplished teachers, they appeared to apply all four of Efland's described aesthetic theories with the greatest emphasis being given to pragmatic, expressive and formalist theories. Similarly, at different parts of a learning cycle, the accomplished teachers appeared to draw upon the learning theories of behaviourism, psychoanalysis and cognitivism. These findings underline the significance of presenting preservice art education students with diverse models of practice that interplay the ideologies of social reconstruction, personal liberation and technical skills and concepts. It appeared that the accomplished teachers acted as bricoleur, picking up fragments of formal theories and applying these in a way that was historically grounded, and inseparable from the experiences of the teachers and children and the ideologies and social values held.

Hamblen (1997) asserts that enacted art curricula tends to incorporate multiple and often conflicting assumptions that may be weighted in a particular direction. As evident in the actions and conversations of the accomplished art teachers, practice was informed by a plurality of traditions, with theories of aesthetics and learning being inferred from

experience rather than deduced from axioms. The accomplished art teachers tended to define themselves as art educators through a range of enacted theories that were constantly tested. The teachers' prepositions, expectations and ideas about art education interacted with their experiences and teaching contexts and were modified and accommodated resulting in dynamic patterns of behaviour and evolving underlying theories of practice. In this way, eclecticism developed as a way the teachers dealt with the realities of classroom teaching and the seeming contradictions of aesthetic and learning theories. This eclectic positioning at times appeared to exist quite precariously in the minds and practices of the accomplished teachers. Several of the critical friends had difficulty articulating clear theoretical positions in relation to art education and expressed feelings that they should be more closely aligned to more definite theoretical positions, yet at the same time, holding strongly to the need for diversity and eclecticism in the way art education was conducted. Through actions and conversations the teachers showed equal value in modern and postmodern aesthetic theories and equally valued creativity, self-expression and individualism alongside formal aesthetics, imitation and art appreciation. Innately, the teachers strived to enact the nexus between theory and practice. Yet, they had difficulty clearly stating the theoretical grounding of the three main models of practice that seemed to be combined to characterise notions of accomplished practice in primary art education. These three groundings were: expressive; social construction and formalist conceptions. May (1989: 150) notes that "teachers most often justify their practice on the basis of feelings, impulse, and intuition rather than systematic inquiry." While this was in part true, it appeared that the accomplished art teachers adopted a highly reflective approach to their teaching and continually tested and modified their theories and practice in light of new concepts, experiences and/or contexts. While initial life experiences and, in some cases, the teachers' art education learning in school and/or as part of preservice teacher education seemed to be important influences, the teaching decisions made by the accomplished teachers appeared largely to emerge from a process of trial and reflection within given teaching contexts and in interplay with the personality, ideas and experiences of the teacher and children. The accomplished teachers were driven by a passionate belief that art is integral to life. Yet they felt that art education frequently existed at the peripheries of education and was excluded and marginalised by the isolated and cellular structures in many primary schools. Similarly, as Hiller (1993: 36) noted generally of art teachers in Australia, the accomplished teachers strongly resisted structured art curricula as it

conflicted with their instincts and feelings about 'what works' for them and was at odds with the artistic values of freedom and individuality they upheld. In this way, the accomplished art teachers adopted an eclectic approach to teaching and learning in art based around the interplay of expressive, social construction and formalist models because these three aspects in varying combinations adapted to the range of experiences of the children and constraints of teaching situations. While some of the teachers recognised seeming contradictions and inconsistencies in their approaches (and others exhibited these contradictions without necessarily recognising or acknowledging them), the accomplished teachers valued pluralism and defied any idea that privileged a given aesthetic or learning theory. The manner in which these conceptions were enacted is summarised in the following sections.

16.5.1 The Expressive

Under this conception, the accomplished teachers placed importance on children's feelings and the manner in which art allowed for expression of individuality. The child was central and originality and unique aesthetic experiences were paramount. The accomplished teachers provided a range of enticing and varied learning experiences aimed at encouraging the child to unfold their ideas, and the teachers were thrilled when this happened and described this as the '*Wow Factor'.* Under this conception the child was acknowledged as an artist, and while the teachers provided levels of formal instruction, this was intended to nurture ideas and skills and stimulate aesthetic conversations rather than provide closed directions. All children were perceived to possess the potential for artistic expression and so the emphasis was on studio production underpinned by encouraging conceptual development through making, verbal and at times with older students, written, conversations within the group of children and between the teacher and the children.

16.5.2 Social construction

This conception acknowledged art as a social tool. The accomplished art teachers passionately believed that art acted as an instrument of improvement for the personal conditions of the individual child and greatly contribute to enhancing humanity. The critical friends spoke of the importance of children constructing their art understandings and skills through direct encounters with their environment. Using a range of making and appreciating tasks, the teachers attempted to personalise learning by relating curriculum

directly to the child's experiences and choosing exemplars of art linked integrally to the experiences and desires of the children. Social construction ideas involved encouraging children to reconstruct their ideas about art through a range of making and appreciating experiences. The accomplished art teachers exemplified this conception by providing art education to the children that was life-centred and aimed to capitalise on the experiences the teacher and children bring to the classroom.

16.5.3 The formalist conception.

The formalist conception was premised on the belief that specified content and common skills and threads of understanding underpinned art and were learnable. The critical friends possessed a strong belief in the importance of the elements and principles of design. Under this conception, the accomplished art teachers directed the children's attention to the structural aspects of art making and appreciating. The accomplished teachers affirmed that art was comprised of concepts, vocabularies and design elements, and that children need to be inducted into these aspects if they are to reach their artistic potential. Programming, classroom displays and oral questioning observed stressed vocabulary and artistic concepts on the belief that the aesthetic experience has unique properties that were of inherent value. The accomplished art teachers provided structured tasks to reinforce artistic skills and concepts and attempted to present skills and concepts in a logical and sequenced manner. In a seeming contradiction to the two previously described models, under a formalist model, the accomplished art teachers supported mimetic conceptions of art and valued imitation of exemplar art from a range of styles, media and cultures.

The combination of the expressive, the social construction and the formalist conceptions of art learning seemed to interrelate to produce the practices observed during the school visits with the accomplished art teachers. These conceptions would need to be covered in art teacher education as a way of inducting preservice teachers into the main ideas governing teaching and learning choices made by accomplished primary art teachers.

This chapter has summarised the main qualities of the accomplished art teachers and described the values they possessed and the manner in which these shaped the eclectic combination of models of practice they exhibited. The following chapter describes the

implications of this in relation to preservice teacher education in generalist primary art education.

17 Implications for preservice art education

Use firmly woven cloth that will not fray. Frail, transparent or semi-transparent materials are too fragile for quilts.
(Hinson 1966: 65)

The border is put on last. If the pattern is a simple one, an elaborate pattern made be used for the border. If however the pattern is complex a simpler border is most effective.
(Hinson 1966: 67)

17.1 Introduction

Within the critical friends group there was a diversity of experiences in relation to preservice teacher education in art, ranging from almost no formal training to specialist training (see section 8.4). There appeared to be no discernible differentiation at the time of the research between those teachers who had experienced extensive training from those who had only limited exposure to art in pre-service education. What was apparent, though, was that the accomplished teachers who had limited experience had gone to considerable lengths to gain skills in art teaching through attending numerous informal and formal courses. For the accomplished teachers who had experienced sustained and relatively high quality preservice art training, they spoke glowingly of the impact it had on their lives and teaching. They recalled college or university as a rich source of inspiration and stimulation. It seemed to have most impact where opportunities existed to elect 'major' studies in art, specialising in art study over an intense period or for a sustained duration. The accomplished art teachers also support the view that exposure to artists and artwork

had impacted on their attitudes and the way they taught art. Given these findings, it would appear that preservice art education has a significant role to play in enhancing the quality of art education practices in schools.

Holt (1997) notes that most generalists are hard working but have limited understanding of materials and a lack of knowledge of art. He further contends that this is directly linked to the way primary teachers have been trained. Wright (1989) also bemoans the quality of primary generalist teachers in relation to art, but attributes this to both teacher education and to earlier art and life experiences. Typically primary art teachers lack confidence about art and are uncertain of what and how to teach in relation to the syllabus. By contrast, the accomplished teachers possessed a repertoire of concrete, aesthetic and personal experiences that allowed them to "*Come up with 100 ideas from this starting point. Teaching them to see beyond what you have given them.[371]*" The focus of preservice art education should provide preservice students with extensive visual experiences to stimulate ideas.

Wilson (1999) argues that making art is only one part of art teacher education. He contends that students need to be given opportunities to perceive and respond to art and to value art as a fundamental part of human experiences. Furthermore, preservice teachers need to know something about art, be able to make and justify aesthetic judgement in terms of qualities on works of art, and be able to talk critically about art and art teaching. The accomplished art teachers were able to talk critically about artists' work and their own art teaching. They possessed the language to interact with each other and artworks and critically reflect on art. In keeping with these findings, preservice art education should aim to initiate students into visual awareness, provide a scaffold of experiences that enable preservice teachers to develop an artistic language, and develop an enthusiasm and passion for art. The critical friends maintained that critical engagement with art in preservice education must be combined with a baseline of art making and practical experiences. Significantly preservice teachers need material usage and organisational skills. They need to have a collection of teaching strategies that can be adapted to a range of contexts and would be inspirational for children.

17.2   More like a web than a line

Current patterns of preservice art education in my university stress logical sequences with the students moving from one point to the next along a pathway predetermined by the lecturer. Dunn (1996: 6) argues that practically everything adults experienced in schools, "trained us to approach learning in a linear, sequential and logical fashion." By contrast, the teaching practices of the accomplished art teachers were characterised by non-linear constructions that promoted critical thinking attributes. Aligned with this, preservice art education needs to present a range of approaches to engage with art in a diverse and non-linear way. Rather than providing sequenced instruction in *'How to be a good art teacher'* preservice art education needs a greater focus on engaging the students in critical communication with art. Such a web-like, non-linear approach could be criticised for presenting a superficial smorgasbord, but this would not be the case if students were encouraged to discover relationships and synthesis ideas into new understandings.

A non-linear approach reinforces non-hierarchical conceptions of art. Under this approach, learning begins with the preservice students' interest and focuses on discovering connectivity between seemingly disparate data. By looking at artworks and engaging in art making, students could formulate new understandings and imagine new possibilities. This web-like approach appeared as a common thread in the stories of the accomplished art teachers and something that should be fostered in preservice art education. Through this approach, preservice students would participate in both practical art making and critical and historical study. It is important during this phase that the preservice students are encouraged to talk and write about art and to ask questions. Students need to be exposed to a number of visual experiences so that they are metaphorically inhaling and exhaling art. For example, in a practical sense, students could be asked to select an art reproduction that they feel could introduce them to the group. Other students would ask questions as to what the artwork chosen says about the given student. The image thus becomes a springboard for stimulating reflection and as a metaphor for attitudes and beliefs. In this way, learning becomes active rather than passive. The accomplished teachers suggested that the lecturer in preservice art education may adopt the role of a collaborator in the learning community, being a facilitator and co-inquirer. As Sullivan (1993: 8) notes, "teachers and students become co-participants in learning and content is approached and acted upon in different ways and from various viewpoints."

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The accomplished art teachers adopted a student-centred approach that recognised individual differences and acknowledged the importance of prior knowledge and experience in art teaching. Similarly, if this practice was emulated in preservice art education individual students would complete different programs of study, and personalise their learning and complete tasks at a different pace. Self-directed learning would allow students to identify personal learning needs and formulate learning goals and programs of study. Such imaginings of preservice art education may be more responsive to learner needs than current practices. They would more heavily emphasise personal relevance and variable interpretations of established knowledge. Such preservice art education programs would allow exploration of cultural values and assumptions and promote social and attitudinal change within a framework that foregrounds personal interest, understandings and development. Preservice art education programs emanating from the social and personal issues of the students allow them to be positioned as critical members of the art community and have ownership of concepts and the acquisition of knowledge and skills. In this way, visual and aesthetic phenomena become framed by the students' experiences. As exemplified by the actions and words of the critical friends, art education needs to construct relationships and make connections between domains, experiences and knowledge. In this way learning occurs in a web-like way, with judgements being formed as a continual process of grasping and letting go of frameworks of understanding in a manner that is flexible with no predetermined rigid stages to follow.

While the models presented by the accomplished art teachers favoured non-linear and student driven conceptions of learning, this did not presuppose a lack of sequence or structure. The accomplished art teachers emphasised the importance of sequential learning in art. They rarely did 'one off' lessons and frequently repeated lesson sequences, reflecting on what was successful and modifying the sequence in line with these considerations. While not always fully documented, the teachers clearly followed a learning sequence that ran from between three and twelve lessons. The teachers also spoke of the need to induct preservice students into an understanding of sequenced art instruction as they felt that beginning teachers struggled to develop an articulated scope and sequence in their teaching. What was implied was that art should be sequenced through a process of web-like connections, encouraging preservice students to expand visual conceptions and critically

construct and reflect upon visual representations and definitions of beauty. To gain this level of critique, preservice students need to be encouraged to continually revise and revisit artworks, refining their skills and critical eye in relation to a range of art. A web-like structure for preservice art education would enable students to revisit pivotal moments in their learning.

To ensure that the web-like connections encourage learning to occur, preservice students need to develop strategies for embedding self-reflexivity and reflection within the learning process. This was a critical quality evident in the actions of accomplished teachers. Cydney (1995: 53) contends that, "Self-reflexivity, self-examination, critical questioning, and a desire to locate things in their socio-political contexts is at the heart of postmodern thinking regarding education." Preservice students need to be encouraged to reconstruct their knowledge through reflection. Under a learner-centred approach, the learner has choice and is the driver of their learning process. In Japanese art education (Nakamura 1999) notions of cultivating a zest for living, that includes the ability to identify problems and make judgements is considered fundamental to developing effective art teachers. Nakamura (1999: 10) suggests that "ability to select and judge in actual situations … is a necessary quality for future teachers." Grauer (1999: 22) suggests that this experimental and reflexive approach to learning should be documented through the use of visual and written diaries. She uses these to track her teacher education students' progress in art. Similarly, the accomplished art teachers exemplified the importance of non-linear approaches and embedded reflective strategies. Devices such as journal writing allow preservice teachers to be exposed to the shifting and contradictory realities that embody the richness of art experiences. Such approaches initiate the development of a learning community that enables preservice students to ask important questions, not merely try to answer them. From the earliest induction into art education, preservice students should be encouraged to question issues such as hierarchy and prejudice of knowledge, legitimacy and accuracy of presentation and interpretation and issues of perception. These questions were asked by accomplished teachers as evident in their risk-taking and critical reflections.

17.3 Risk-taking and reflection in preservice art education
The most striking quality of the accomplished teachers was their attitude of risk-taking and critical thinking and reflection. The members of the critical friends group exhibited a

contagious spirit of inquiry, wonder and rebellion. They were courageous teachers who questioned rules and maintained personal standards connected to their underlying beliefs and assumptions about what was best for children. While they spoke of understanding and considering the views of others, they did not appear to bend to pressure from others and maintained conflicting views from authoritative positions. They were passionate about the value of risk-taking to the art process and adopted an adventurous and experimental stance despite facing a number of contextual, resource and/or people limitations. The accomplished art teachers saw problems as being a challenge and worked proactively to change the views of others to more readily accept the perceived primacy of art education in the life of the child. To encapsulate these aspects in teacher education is challenging and risky, as traditionally, the preservice art education conducted within my university has followed a linear pattern based on inducting students into a number of preexisting traditions and skills. The success of any program of reform in art preservice education may be limited by the general conditions in teacher education that tend to be conservative and stifle risk-taking.

To more adequately induct students into a discourse that values risk-taking and uncertainty, preservice art education needs to shift from a focus to 'follow this procedure' to a focus on encouraging the students to think hypothetically in a framework of instruction based on a series of *'What ifs'*! As stated in the previous section, this requires the abolition of linear structures and the adoption of more complex web-like patterns of learning driven largely by an awareness of the needs, values and personal experiences students bring to the art room. Based more on imaginings than facts and preservice art education needs to acknowledge the strong relationship that exists in art between thoughts and feelings. Anderson argues (1991) that teaching independent judgement and critical reflection is an important function of tertiary art education. In order to make independent judgements the students need to feel secure to take risks within a community of learners. This security is fostered through shared communication, a sense of relevance and ownership, and innovative experiences.

The ultimate aim of preservice primary art education should be to equip the students with the courage and understandings to make choices and be able to critically examine the decisions made. Grauer (1999) argues that art education needs to "Help preservice teachers to examine their decisions about art education in conjunction with values about subject

matter knowledge and practical applications expressed in the field." This requires active participation and a problem-centered approach. It is important that preservice students do not become passive receptors of information or predetermined activities. Instead there must be an emphasis on those open-ended, multiple-visioned, potentially interpretive activities that serve as a foundation for existence. Visual approaches such as these are inherently risky and problematic, but as Derrida (1987) suggests, difficulty educates, while simplicity brings false clarity. A risk-taking approach to art teacher education would be based around non-linear models that emphasise critical thinking. Based on a synthesis of the practices observed in the classroom visits and the critical friends discussions, a preservice art education program in my university designed to foster risk-taking and critical inquiry might include:

Teaching techniques such as:

- Opportunities to engage in visual experiences in a range of locations;
- Learning communities giving provision for collaboration in a social learning environment;
- Encouragement for students to voice opinions and raise issues of conflict;
- Evaluation of aspects of credibility, beauty and relevance;
- Analysis of information and ideas, forming relationships between seemingly disparate aspects;
- Recognition of the plausibility of multiple questions, answers and notions of truth;
- Perception of the complexities inherent to art;
- Withholding closure or judgement until evidence is gathered and validated within social and historical contexts; and
- Provision of aesthetic 'play' activities where students explore techniques, ideas and beliefs in a safe, supportive environment;

Student learning opportunities such as:

- Partner and small group critique and exchanges;
- Maintenance of reflective journals;
- Critiquing a range of written , visual and other forms of communication; and
- Requiring the students to predict, experiment, revise, rethink and form philosophical bases.

Combined with risk-taking, the other key feature apparent in the classroom visits was the extensive use of modelling in accomplished art teaching and learning. The following section examines imaginings of the way modelling can be used within preservice art education courses.

17.4 The importance of modelling

All the accomplished art teachers visited made extensive use of a variety of models or examples within their classes. They used models to explain techniques, aid interpretation, stimulate motivation and involve the students in an artistic induction process based on emulating aspects of professional art practice. They applied multiple models, including art prints, photographs and actual items, feeling that a single model failed to adequately accommodate the different types of learning and learning strategies of the children in their classes. The accomplished art teachers also tried to present models from minority visual discourses such as those from women, children and indigenous people. The extensive use of multiple models should be a feature of preservice art education.

17.4.1 Visual experiences as models

The accomplished art teachers were visual people who were great collectors. They gathered resources from a range of sources and formed these into groups or themes of items that may be useful at some future point in their teaching or planning. Travel, visual encounters and gallery visits (as will be discussed more fully in section 17.5) were vital resources. Additionally, the accomplished teachers looked in art books and at art prints to gather ideas. The accomplished teachers claimed that these experiences acted as models and *"really helps me to think up ideas"*[372]. Visual situations and resources become catalysts for planning learning and teaching and were used directly in the teaching process. The accomplished art teachers generated quality art learning around any theme by fossicking within their collected resources. Preservice art education students need to be exposed to a range of visual experiences, both within art galleries and the broader environment and gather resources that can be formed into related groups as a catalyst for developing teaching and learning units. Visual models serve to reveal the richness of art and stimulate critical aesthetic dialogue. Art is an ever-expanding concept and exposure to a rich and varied collection of exemplars assists the student in trying to define it. All the members of the critical friends group described themselves as avid art gallery visitors. In particular, they

spoke of attending the Art Gallery of NSW as a rejuvenating and inspirational experience. The accomplished art teachers talked of gallery experiences as being less about seeing wonderful and beautiful things (although this was part of the joy), and more about the way galleries enhance artistic thinking, give them ideas for their teaching, and allow them to enter into a critical dialogue with the works of artists. Grauer (1999: 23) comments that "teaching art teachers about and through art appears to encourage artistic teaching". It was apparent in the accomplished teachers' conversations that viewing art established critical creative conversations. In a similar way, preservice art students in my university should be encouraged to visit galleries and talk in groups describing and imagining what they see, hear, touch, smell and think as they encounter the artworks. The students need exposure to works that are non-representational and uncomfortable as these further serve to stimulate artistic conversation raising issues of ambiguity, depth and cultural considerations.

In addition to the exposure students receive to artistic models within gallery or other visual contexts it is also important that the practices in preservice art education align more closely to the practice of artists.

17.4.2 Artists as models

While it is important that art curriculum is inspired by art practice, the accomplished art teachers highlight the false assumption that preservice art education is about making people become artists. As the accomplished teachers stressed, artistic skill or understandings are less important than the need to feel a member of the artistic community. To this aim, preservice art education needs to use an artistic practice model as a way of inducting students into artistic *modes of working* and developing a sense of belonging to the art community. Keifer-Boyd (1996: 38) describes a process she undertakes with her tertiary art education students where they re-enact the thought and working processes that artists use in creating artworks. She reflects that the, "Students learned that each art criticism model accentuated certain types of interpretations while it veiled aspects generated by other models." The realisations achieved by Keifer-Boyd's preservice students showed that they were beginning to enter the dialog and thought processes of the artistic community. This was more significant than the achievement of advanced art making skills. Through engaging students in the artistic process as a model of practice, they learn the vocabulary to be able to speak and hear the language of artists and can thus participate more fully in the

artistic community. This approach to preservice art education closely mirrors a form of apprenticeship whereby role playing the art community allows the students to internalise the norms and values of the art profession. This gives the students an artistic identity and involves them with a range of active and tacit learning experiences that form a praxis between the preservice art education learning environment, the art world, the classroom and themselves. This form of identification is vital for preservice primary art students as all members of the accomplished art teachers group identified with being a member of the artistic community and different from other, non-members. It should be noted though, that the accomplished teachers did not see themselves as being 'artistic' and this emphasises the clear distinction between an identification with creative and aesthetic communities without the need to be a personally skilled artist. An apprenticeship model derived from art practice allows preservice art education students to discuss aesthetic objects and art making experiences and to start to form relationships and connections between the work of artists, critics, historians, artisans, designers, galleries and museums. Through a community, it may be possible for preservice art education students to acquire a substantial vocabulary to enable them to engage in reflection, discussion and to question existing assumptions.

Apprenticeship can also be enacted through a process of modelling based on observing and communicating with accomplished art teachers who might act as mentors for the students.

17.4.3 Teachers as models

Galbraith argues (1996) that teacher role models can be very influential in moulding the thinking of preservice teachers. As I conducted this research with the accomplished art teachers I was struck by how valuable it would be if my students could see and hear what I was observing and recording. The accomplished art teachers also spoke of good teachers they had seen and how they bemoaned limited chances to see other art teachers in action. Given this, a recommendation is that preservice students have access to work alongside experienced, high quality practitioners. Accomplished art teachers working in the field could initiate students into teaching practice in a range of contexts. By providing preservice teachers with opportunities to observe and study art teachers in action this may act as starting points for building conversations and communities. Through conversations the preservice students can reflect upon the complexities of art and the multi-faceted nature of teaching in particular contexts. Students should be encouraged to critically describe,

interpret and appraise what they see, while at the same time tacitly gaining a repertoire of instructional approaches and examples of enactment of syllabus issues. The success of teacher models appeared dependent upon selecting accomplished exemplars. The accomplished teacher models exemplify risk-taking strategies and are characteristically innovative and creative. This is not to say that they need to be held as experts, separate from the students. Ideally the teacher models and students could work on collaborative projects. Under a collaborative view of apprenticeship the students engage in dealing with practical problems such as discipline and organisation of resources in the context of the spontaneity of the classroom and children's responses. Ideally, such a system of apprenticeship would be voluntary for all participants. The focus should be on the way a close community could be formed between the university students and the accomplished teachers that makes the collaborative process and mutual benefits central to the model. Kvale (1995: 1) contends that an apprenticeship idea where accomplished art teachers are used as models bridges the theory-practice gap by "embedding learning in the practical activities in natural contexts." He claims that this leads to a tacit mastery of skills, knowledge and values of a discipline.

Teaching models, in the form of 'demonstration lessons', were common practice in preservice primary art education in my university up until the late 1980's. These were abandoned as they were perceived to be 'staged' and costly. Current students do not have the opportunity to observe and reflect on quality art teachers in action. To overcome this, Galbraith (1996) conducted a study into the use of interactive laser video discs linked to multimedia Hypertext, to show footage of local art specialists in action. The result of this initial foray into online learning was quite successful and showed a place for new technology in providing students with teaching models. At the time Galbraith's research was completed, technology was expensive and complex, but the use of the interactive models allowed students to revisit events, freeze images and interrogate their ideas about teaching. The images and accompanying texts provided students with the opportunity to gain insight into the actions of practitioners. Internet based online learning may provide further opportunities to develop virtual communities, connecting accomplished teachers and students. Students could develop critical incident case studies and record these in learning journals, discuss issues and connect with relevant philosophical and research literature. Online technology may also be away to expose students to models of children's

art. For the accomplished teachers, they may appreciate the contact with the students as a way to overcome their perceived feelings of isolation in their schools.

17.4.4 Children's art as models

The accomplished art teachers collected extensive photographic records of children's artworks. They used these as models for the children in their classes, as examples of an idea or technique and to give the children a sense that their work is valued and important. The children were empowered as their work became the exemplar, and they were clearly positioned within the artistic community. The accomplished art teachers have albums of children's artwork available as a resource, both to help them with their planning and for reference for the children throughout the course of a lesson, particularly if the children lacked inspiration or needed to develop a technique. Using children's artworks as a model was a highly significant aspect of all the lessons observed. This has two main implications for preservice art education. Firstly, the students should make visual collections of their artworks and the art of other students. This could be done by constructing electronic portfolios available for all students to access and use. Secondly, the students should start to collect visual examples of children's artwork. Once again, students could develop online scanned records, galleries or CD-ROMs as an alternative to the shoeboxes I often observed in the accomplished teachers' classrooms!

In addition to a diversity of models that should be presented to preservice art education students, they need to be engaged in significant visual encounters.

17.5 Significant visual encounters

Within the general backgrounds of the accomplished teachers, childhood experiences seemed to be a crucial factor in the development of aesthetic ideals. In particular, significant visual experiences both within galleries and in everyday life appeared to have given the accomplished art teachers a heightened visual sense. The implication of this for preservice art education is that students who have not experienced these things in their childhoods need to be exposed to visual stimuli in galleries and their environment. Students need to be trained in artistic perception. Significant visual exposure appeared to be vital to the development of an artistic mindset. The accomplished art teachers spoke of needing to "*open the students' eyes and really get them to see.*"[373] To do this, the students need to acquire a fascination with the visual and a heightened sense of visual awareness.

The accomplished art teachers recalled many examples of where they saw beauty, pattern and an aesthetic dimension in their everyday environment. They believed this was an important aspect of becoming a good art teacher. Preservice art teachers should be encouraged to pay attention to aesthetic properties and artistic features intrinsically apparent in everyday places and things. Venable (1998: 7) asserts that visionary encounters are influenced by the entirety of past experiences and the totality of human experiences. These visionary encounters appear to be vital to aesthetically based preservice art education. Preservice art students require experiences that encourage them to appreciate works of art in increasingly greater depth, create expressive visual entities through manipulation of media, and refine a sense of aesthetic awareness and beauty.

Aesthetic sensibility can be developed within a preservice art education program that immerses the students in a range of significant visual encounters. The arts and aesthetic encounters need to be woven into the fabric of the preservice students' lives, seamlessly interrelated to their emerging identity as a primary art teacher. Through both formal and informal visual encounters, the preservice art education students should be introduced to the richness and variety of art. The beginning teachers should be able to go out into schools with aesthetic sensibilities and confidence in their membership of the greater art community. As exemplified by the accomplished teachers, to obtain this level of aesthetic confidence, preservice art teachers require:

- an ability to think and feel aesthetically;
- experiences and pleasurable artistic encounters;
- an emotional connection or relationship with some artwork, prompting sensory contemplation;
- an awareness of formal properties and an ability to from conceptions about the nature and diversity of art;
- the ability to participate in artistic conversations; and
- the confidence to express evaluative utterances in relation to judgements of their artwork and the work of others.

There are three main strategies derived from this study that may be used to develop an aesthetic sensibility. These are: connecting art to life experiences through encounter and play; visiting galleries; and participating in artistic conversations.

17.5.1 Connecting art to life experiences through encounter and play

From the conversations with the accomplished teachers, there appeared to be strong connections between making art and life experiences. In particular, the accomplished teachers continued to be surprised and delighted by the nature of everyday scenes and possessed an understanding that art is all around them. The critical friends responded to the beauties of nature. They were avid collectors and experienced joy over a flower, shell, stone or seed. In this way, the accomplished art teachers conversations and actions suggested that art experiences were embedded in everyday visual encounters. Donovan (1993: 53) asserts that art is not "extracted and commodified as a "masterpiece", distinct from the everyday world. Because of this the everyday world remains illuminated by its beauty." The implications of this for my preservice art education students is that they need to be taken to places such as beaches, parks, city streets where they will see and respond to visually fascinating situations. These visits need to be guided so the lecturer nurtures in the preservice art teachers the skills of aesthetic perception. As Sophie, one of the accomplished teahcers, explains in relation to the children in her class, "*We made all the kids stop and teach them to stop… stop and look how beautiful… stop …I think we can open a door so that next time they might stop.*"[374] In a practical sense, my preservice art students could collect objects they find during a walk around the city that represent themselves, such as a drink can to represent the way they feel contained or a power cord to symbolise energy. By drawing these objects and developing artworks from the objects, the students are starting to explore semiotic relationships and the construction of art through sign, symbol and metaphor. In this way the students can be encouraged to perceive that isolated images and concepts can be groups together to form aesthetic generalisations that carry meaning. To engage in this experience fully, the preservice students need the fresh eyes and mind of a child and so any such activities relies on engaging the students in imaginative 'play-like' activities. They need ample opportunities to extend their creativity and invent things. To feel safe to take risks and play, the students require considerable positive reinforcement and a learning context based around forming a supportive community. The students need to be immersed in these experiences and allow the experiences to exert influence on them. As Frange (1998: 108) notes the students need to "eat" visual encounters "as though they are food, digests them, produces new knowledge, new actions and new questioning."

17.5.2 Visiting galleries

As stated previously, the accomplished art teachers were passionate gallery goers. Art appreciation appears to be one way to entice people into the wonders of art and initiate them into a passion that will last all their life. Similarly, it is of primary importance that preservice art teachers are provided with rich and varied gallery experiences. Jeffers (1996: 7) argues that these experiences need to be of high quality and expose the students to images that capture individual visions of self. He contends that the greatest impact of art is when the "spectator identifies him/herself with the attributes of the represented character and sees his or her life in terms of the life depicted. Through high quality gallery experiences, Johanson (1982) argues that preservice teachers develop the ability to appreciate works of art. For this process to occur, he argues that students need to open themselves to aesthetic experience and be familiar with and be able to apply methods of art criticism. Through exposure to artworks in galleries the students may gain internal points of entry through which they can develop an awareness of visual styles and techniques that can be applied in the way they talk to children about their art making.

Furthermore, the accomplished art teachers used the gallery as an important reference point for gaining lesson and teaching unit ideas. The accomplished art teachers did not follow the syllabus structure or lesson suggestions, but rather generated teaching units by studying artworks, visiting the gallery and gathering resources. To this end, it could be argued that in the limited time available to preservice art education in my university, less time should be spent studying syllabus documentation and more time devoted to gallery visits and opportunities to gather theme related resources. The accomplished teachers spoke of the way visiting galleries trigger teaching ideas. They claimed that, "*When I go to an exhibition, I am just so full of ideas*"[375]. The accomplished teachers draw on their gallery experiences to select a diverse range of artworks that challenged the children and stimulated discussions in art appreciation lessons. All the accomplished teachers observed used images to initiate art making lessons and encouraged the children to look at and be inspired by artworks during art lessons.

17.5.3 Participating in artistic conversations

The accomplished art teachers considered art to be a powerful form of communication and that students need to be literate in the visual language of art. Preservice teachers need to be able to read and understand the visual symbols that communicate the complexities of life.

In this way, art as a form of oral and written language is important. To this goal, preservice primary art students need to engage in verbal and written activities associated with art.

An important part of participating in gallery visits and other visual encounters is the way such experiences stimulate engagement in artistic conversations. Preservice teachers need opportunities to develop and use art vocabulary. Nakamura (1999: 11) considers that it is "important for art educators to introduce art terms and vocabulary, along with visuals, in order to expand students' abilities to express and share their ideas with others." By combining visits with extensive group discussions, the preservice teachers may gain the experience and tools to critique images. The accomplished art teachers felt that this was a highly significant skill, as it is more important that a generalist teacher can talk to children about their art, than it is that they are themselves are skilled art makers. The accomplished teachers bemoaned that many primary teachers do not know how to talk to children about their art. All the accomplished teachers observed used a large volume of pictures as a stimulus for artmaking conversations. The accomplished teachers felt that preservice teachers need active intervention and guidance to assist them in knowing how to stimulate children's art appreciation and give critical responses to children's art making. Preservice art education therefore needs to focus on developing learning conversations with the children. In particular, preservice teachers need help in how to use verbal responsive questions to engage children in sustained, critical conversations about their artwork and the work of other artists. If this is done successfully, the children may learn to ask their own questions and gain the language and discourse of the art discipline and nurture their critical aesthetic eye. Geahigan (1999) argues that teachers need to be able to, "enter into a dialogue with students about the meaning of works of art, both adult works of art and those which the children produce." Through participating in gallery experiences and conversations about these experiences, the preservice students are likely to develop a sense of community, being able to speak the 'dialect' that allows them to understand concepts of quality and meaning within artworks. Read (1954) argues artistic sensibility exists in a person who uses intuition and is constantly restless and alive to thinking about and responding to something new. This disposition was clearly apparent in the accomplished teachers and needs to be fostered through guided inquiry in the minds of the preservice teachers. This process must be rooted in the viewing and talking about art. As Bargellini (1954: 20) cautions, "Error exists in the belief that the educational purpose of art is

something which is external to the actual work of art, whereas, in reality it <u>is</u> the work of art itself: the work as such cannot fail to have an educational effect." There is also the further problem that visual encounters and gallery experiences might have been powerful experiences for the accomplished teachers because they already possessed certain attributes, such as visual awareness that made them receptive to such experiences. Preservice generalist primary art students frequently have negative attitudes to art and it may be the case, that they can be taken to galleries and other visual experiences, but it is more difficult to make them 'drink' of these experiences and enter into artistic conversations.

Allied with the need to develop a language to talk about art, the accomplished teachers express concern about the lack of fundamental knowledge beginning teachers possess in relation to art and art education. This problem is further compounded by the perception that the current syllabus provides almost no specific knowledge components to guide generalist teachers.

17.6 Knowledge and understandings

The accomplished art teachers expressed the concern that preservice education was failing to provide students with sufficient knowledge of art history and theory. Holt (1995:251) noted that: "Where primary teachers are concerned, there is a clear need for many of them to develop and rather more adequate levels of knowledge and understanding about art." Similarly, Grauer (1999) notes that teacher education programs need to expand the prospective teachers understanding of the goals of art. These goals include an indepth basic knowledge of concepts and skills fundamental to art, insight into the basis of knowledge specific to the field, and ability to be able to communicate the knowledge and insights gained. This not only enriches the likely quality of art education that children will receive, but importantly plays a significant role in the confidence levels of the commencing teachers. Eisner (1992: 611) contends that:

> If a teacher does not know what to teach or is insecure about a subject, attention
> must be paid to matters of content… It is difficult to be pedagogically graceful
> when you are lost in unfamiliar territory.

Eisner suggests that teachers require some degree of mastery of both content and methods pertinent to art education if they are to teach it well. While on face value, this appears to be

logical, the difficulty in teacher education is how much and what knowledge is of most importance. With limited time available in my university for preservice teachers to learn about art education, decisions need to be made about priorities. The accomplished teachers exemplified that experiences, a visual awareness and risk-taking attitudes were of primary significance. Given this, time has to be distributed to allow these attributes to develop. Conversely, art knowledge is complex and extensive. Students need to have knowledge in such areas as painting and sculpture. At the same time, they need knowledge about art movements and art education theories and how to express this knowledge. Furthermore, there are many types of knowledge that the accomplished art teachers possessed and would be desirable in the training of preservice teachers. These include tacit and intuitive knowledge, explicit spoken, written and visual knowledge, and practical knowledge. Knowledge may also include analysis, evaluation and criticism. Given the complexity of providing all this in a very limited time frame, the recommendation would be to focus more on the perceptual and experimental approach as suggested earlier. Through risk-taking, critical problems solving and significant visual encounters with art and the environment, learning conversations are developed that integrate knowledge with feeling, intuition and imagination. Preservice art education should stress creative and imaginative engagement that acknowledges the web-like nature of knowledge acquisition and the manner in which risk-taking experiences and communication enhance the learning process, and ultimately knowledge acquisition in art education.

The other difficulty in preservice art teacher education is the emphasis that should be given to the development of art making skills.

17.7 Making skills

The extent of making and studio production that should be included in preservice art education caused considerable ambiguity and dissent in the critical friends group. Studio-based activities have been a prominent part of preservice art education at my university. At the same time the expense and time required to successfully engage in studio work is becoming increasingly scarce. Concurrently, the art world is witnessing a convergence of production with appreciation, concepts with skills and techniques with meaning. Allied with this, the critical friends expressed the concern that too much emphasis in teacher education was placed on an individual's skill in making art. Honigman and Bhavnagri

(Honigman and Bhavnagri 1998) contend that art education needs to move beyond art production. Similarly, Walker (1996) feels that studio activity dominates art education. The preoccupation of teacher education continues to be with technique and processes. Wilson (1999) bemoans that teacher education students tend to play with media alone and avoid almost all other aspects of art instruction. He suggests that the 'making agenda' needs to be broadened to include the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes, experiences, connections and judgements.

The accomplished art teachers stressed that teachers do not have to be personally artistic to become an excellent teacher of art. They were critical of the prevailing doctrine that implies that teachers need to become artists. They felt that a too higher level of making ability isolated teachers from the needs of the children. Instead they favoured an approach where the teacher adopts the role of a making 'co-learner' in the artistic process. As one of the accomplished teachers stated, *"I think it is really good in primary school not to be an expert, because the kids see you having a go and have a bit of a laugh."[376]*

Conversely, writers such as Ziegfeld (1954) claims that art teachers should be competent artists with substantial practical knowledge of media. Hickey (1999: 29) also suggests that sustained engagement in art making enhances conceptions of art and subsequent abilities to teach art. He notes that:

> Students who were taught art history… in a program which integrated studio art activities and art history, performed better than those who participated in the same unit taught by the lecture/slide method with no related activities… students gained more knowledge of the subject matter when the activities of practical art and art history and criticism were related.

Similarly, Boughton (1999) believes that it is a reasonable argument that art teachers should have the technical and conceptual ability to make objects from a wide selection of visual arts. The basis of the ideas expressed by the critical friends was that it is important that preservice students engage in producing art so that they feel part of the art community and are not alienated from the artistic process. While it may appear ambiguous, the critical friends stressed that personal art making expertise was unimportant, but considered the process of engaging in art making to be very important. Art making in preservice education should assist in developing the creative processes of the prospective teacher and enlarge their vision by revealing the relationship between art, humanity and the world. Art

making provides the opportunity build skills of understanding art through providing opportunities to experiment with the conventions of art. Freedman and Wood (1999) contend that students gain a great deal of knowledge about imagery through intergraphical experiences. Through art making, students learn that works of art have meaning for life and that art is a powerful tool for learning about self in society. Basic art making experiences allow preservice students to go beyond the teacher as transmitter of knowledge to a point where the students is creator of understandings. Furthermore, by providing art making experiences, the lecturer can ascertain the manner in which the students have internalised artistic knowledge. Understandings will only be transferred into the production and conceptual domains when they are meaningful enough to allow this process to occur.

In summary, while the accomplished teachers do not see that preservice teachers need to be skilled art makers, they believed that art is essentially a practical discipline and preservice teachers require sequenced and substantial skills training and practical engagement in art making experiences. They particularly stressed that students needed to gain confidence and instruction in how to draw. As one teacher noted, "*You wouldn't give them a piece of paper and say write.*"[377] The accomplished teachers stressed that preservice teachers needed skills and ideas in which they can succeed. In particular, observational drawing skills was seen to be important. This was considered to be a basic to teaching art, and as Hernandez and Freedman (1998: 70) note: "Once graphic intuition is acquired, it shall never be lost and it makes possible that representation springs up as a spontaneous act." Holt (1995) further contends that art necessarily involves the shaping of expressive materials in order to make sense of ideas and feelings.

Given the suggestion that art making is an important inclusion in preservice art education, the accomplished teachers stressed that students need considerable amounts of sequenced drawing skills, but that they also need to be exposed to a wide range of other media. These activities should be very practically based and move from simple to complex. The aim should not be to produce artists, but rather to provide art making experiences alongside other learners. This should be a positive experience with new and exciting media such as photography and computer graphics being available. Students need to experience learning sequences, rather than one off activities. Skill within forms needs to be stressed, but this

should operate in conjunction with the communication of ideas and feelings through creative experiences.

Similarly, engagement in art making was seen by the critical friends as being important in assisting preservice students to feel part of the art community. The preservice students, as with the children observed in the accomplished teachers' classrooms, should be referred to as artists and it should be their role to maintain the art studio. This also tacitly teaches the preservice students that art is a practical subject and that primary teachers require knowledge and experience of how to manage resources. The accomplished art teachers bemoaned the trend in universities towards the theoretical and not addressing the practical skills needed to become effective art teachers. In particular, it was considered that a lack of organisation and resource management skills posed significant barriers preventing beginning teachers doing art lessons. The teachers needed to experience strategies for ordering and arranging art making materials, and the practicalities of classroom art teaching. It is therefore a recommendation that practical art making be a vital part of preservice art education, but that the focus should shift from producing skilled artists to a focus on the art making process and the way it inducts preservice students into the art world and prepares them from the practical skills needed to effectively teach art. If time for art making is very limited, the emphasis should be on drawing and new media areas.

A key role that art making should play in preservice art education is to give students confidence and enjoyment. The accomplished teachers spoke enthusiastically of art making experiences at college, and to a lesser extent university. Fun is an important part of the rationale for art making, as many preservice students enter university art instruction with an extremely negative attitude and the lecturer must address changing student attitudes.

17.8 Changing attitudes

The critical friends felt that many primary teachers have negative attitudes to art because of the poor quality art experiences they received in primary school themselves as children. The accomplished teachers felt that attitudinal change was at the core of effective preservice art education. Certainly it is my experience that the students entering initial primary teacher education have considerable fear of art and believe they are 'no good' at it.

This finding is further emphasised in the work of Ashton (1999). One of the main goals teacher education needs to address is the negative perceptions the students have of art. This is not a simple task. The students have generally had twelve years of school experience that has reinforced in their mind the inadequacies of their art making ability. Attitudes are not directly observable and so the lecturer is largely reliant upon motivation, behaviour and dialog to determine pre-existing attitudes. It is also not easy to directly source the formation of an attitude to a particular time or event. As Morris and Stuckhardt (1977: 22) note, "Responses to art do not occur in a social-psychological void; rather they occur within complex individuals whose inclinations toward art are shaped, mediated and influenced by many situational and dispositional factors." Changing the way a student thinks about art is far harder to achieve in a few hours than teaching a new teaching approach. My lecturing experience tends to suggest that students often resist change. Having experienced continual failure experiences in previous experiences in art they may be reluctant to open themselves to new learning, to persevere to broaden their views or to try to understand challenging ideas. Furthermore, attitudinal change can be a frustrating process for lecturers, who may try a number of vanguard methodologies and art education theories, but still find attitudes remain largely unchanged. As with all teaching, the success of any program of attitudinal change is largely dependent upon the soul and passion that the lecturer brings to the learning process.

The attitudes the preservice students' possess cannot be categorised into a single entity, and 'treated' accordingly. It is likely that they will represent a diversity of experiences and social contexts in which the attitudes were acquired. Similarly, they may vary in intensity and complexity, and indeed for a minority of students they may come to tertiary art education with confidence and enthusiasm. Morris and Stuckhardt (1977: 27) define an art attitude as being, "A learned and relatively enduring evaluative system of affective dispositions held towards art referents." They claim that art attitudes are derived from direct contacts with art. They argue that art attitudes can be both learnt and taught, and are not innate. They characterise attitudes as being:

- based on social referents,
- stable and enduring,
- interrelated, and
- affective and evaluative.

Morris and Stuckhardt contend that attitudes strongly influence motivation and determine overt behaviour. Given this, it is essential that attitudinal change is part of teacher education. The accomplished teachers instinctively felt what Morris and Stuckhardt's research confirms. A favourable attitude is a prerequisite to making, appreciating and experiencing art. My experience with undergraduate students and the comments from the critical friends regarding their experiences with professional development with primary teachers indicates that the most common attitudes are a lack of confidence and fear in relation to art.

To counteract these attitudes, the accomplished art teachers felt preservice teachers need lots of positive reinforcement and innovative and success-orientated activities that provide opportunities for growth in confidence, skills levels and expanded frames of reference in relation to art knowledge. Wright (1989) believes that a great deal of sensitivity and time is required to break down students' personal barriers towards the arts and to develop within them sufficient confidence to want to participate in, or even teach art. Novosel-Beittel (1978) favours a total immersion approach as a way to instigate sustained attitudinal changes. This requires rich and varied art experiences that promote active participation and interpretation. The critical friends felt it was important that preservice students feel a sense of security and enjoyment in their art learning if they are to succeed. This can be achieved by combining risk-taking experiences with guidance and a sense of a community.   A strong supportive learning environment may help to protect the student from feeling vulnerable and anxious.

17.9   Conclusion: Overall implications for teacher education
This chapter has distilled the comments of the accomplished teachers to form themes that can be used to inform and enhance the quality of future preservice art education within my university. Generalist preservice primary education is facing difficult times. The standard of art instruction in primary schools is poor and yet there is declining time and energy being put into preservice art education. The findings of this study attempt to establish some of the priorities for preservice art education. Furthermore, there are implications of these findings for the way teacher education more broadly needs to consider structure and learning. To summarise these recommendations, the key change that needs to be instigated

is the way preservice art education is organised. Preservice art education needs to move away from a linear model to embrace greater risk-taking and interconnected learning organisations. Within my university, this means a move from week-by-week planning to more problem based models of learning that are individualised to the students' needs and experiences and make greater use of problem solving and the development of critical and reflective thinking. Allied to this approach, this study indicates that preservice teachers need greater exposure to significant visual encounters. These encounters need to be both in the preservice students' direct environment and also within the context of galleries. The implication of this is the need to move outside the traditional lecture room and studio environment to situate learning in the context of galleries, the community and the local natural and urban environments. In these environments, the preservice students need to be challenged with activities that encourage the development of aesthetic awareness and a critical eye. It is also important that such activities allow artistic communication to develop. This may include communication with other students, but also conversations with art professionals, accomplished art teachers and the broader art community. It appears significant that preservice teachers develop a sense of belonging to an artistic community and feel confident in the discourses of this community. This discourse needs to include both written and verbal critique and also the ability to be able to make art. The focus though is not on developing preservice students into critics or artists, but rather on allowing them to feel part of this discourse and confident in their abilities to participate. Part of developing this confidence is providing the preservice teachers with appropriate models of both art and teaching practices. It is also important that this learning occurs within a positive learning community that is supportive and engaging. At this stage, this may be achieved through the reconfiguring of current approaches, but technological advances may also provide further scope to address these issues of change required in preservice art education.

The following final chapter explores broadly the overall research approach and relates the changes that occurred within the accomplished teachers and myself as a result of participating in this investigation.

18 Re-searching the research:

Binding: the material used to finish around the edges of a quilt to cover the edges
of the three layers and hold them together. It is the finishing of the quilt.
(Hinson 1966: 28)

Hemming: Is to fold and sew down the edge of; making small slanting stitches
from right to left catching only a thread or two under the material.
(Hinson 1966: 29)

18.1 Introduction:

In addition to the significant findings related to teacher education, there were also a number
of issues that arose in the research that highlighted the way the research process impacted
on the accomplished teachers. This final chapter draws together some of the additional
issues that arose in the research and makes critical reflections about the research process.
The earlier part of this chapter examines the changes that occurred in the teachers and
myself, while the latter parts of the chapter reflect on the methodology and its likely
impact. The concluding section indicates future directions and highlights the overall
conclusions of the research.

18.2 Questioning of accomplishment

As stated previously, the accomplished art teachers actively disputed being 'accomplished'
at the commencement of the study. They appeared to be genuinely bemused that they had
been nominated in the group. While they all expressed a level of confidence that they
could teach art effectively, they similarly claimed that they were not really very good at
teaching art and rejected ideas of ascribed expertise. During the course of the research,
however, I noticed that the teachers both privately and within the critical friends group
began to accept, that while they remained lifelong learners (see section 18.3), they
possessed certain skills and knowledge that enabled them to teach art effectively, and thus
be considered to be accomplished. They constantly argued that there was no single 'best' or
'good' way of teaching. Like art, the accomplished art teachers saw diversity and risk-
taking as the key factors in an eclectic definition of accomplishment. Furthermore, they
contended that 'good' teaching and learning can be defined pragmatically in terms of what
works for them and has meaning within their context. In this way, accomplishment existed
as a standard of performance dependent on time, place, context and the personal views of

the teachers. The critical friends maintained that it was impossible in art to say that one teacher is better than another or that by using certain methods it automatically makes better teachers. Accomplishment was also seen to exist in a direct relationship to students, be they preservice art students or children. Accomplishment was not so much about methods, as about personal beliefs and the nature of artistic interaction between teaching ideas and students' learning.

As a group, they realised that they shared similar, often identical, characteristics and that many of these characteristics mirrored common features of good quality teachers. The accomplished teachers had a love of their subject and an ability to stimulate and inspire their students. Similarly, they could structure learning effectively according to students' interest and level and used clear explanations and demonstrations. The accomplished art teachers had respect and concern for the children, and yet balanced this against the desire for children to be independent and original learners. They used active learning approaches and worked as facilitators and cooperative learners with the children. The accomplished art teachers were active lifelong learners and learnt from their students and numerous other sources. Similarly, they were reflective teachers who strived to improve teaching and learning and were adventurous in trying new approaches. They saw their role as a facilitator, providing resources that stimulated ideas and made learning possible. In these ways, the accomplished art teachers appeared to be high quality practitioners whose actions confirmed their nomination as accomplished art teachers for the purposes of this study.

There was a widely held belief in the group that the nature of art rejects preordained, limted outcomes and systematic assessment. It was felt that art exists on a higher domain that cannot be measured by such things. Because of this disdain for assessment, many of the accomplished teachers disputed the need to assess. I do not feel that this latter point weakened their position as accomplished art teachers. By contrast, it appeared that their views on assessment come not from a lack of understanding or thought, but rather from sustained acknowledgment of the complexities of assessing young children's artwork and a desire to find a position that reconciled at times conflicting views of art.

By the conclusion of the research, the teachers had changed. There was a noticeable growth in their beliefs of self-efficacy. Initially, they were unsure of why they had been

chosen to participate and actively denied any level of expertise. They were largely working alone and relatively unnoticed within the context of their school. Yet, through meeting other colleagues and participating in the critical friends discussions, I witnessed their self-esteem and feelings of worth increase greatly. They became more confident and by the end of the process they thought deeply and reflectively about their comments and acknowledged that they had levels of skill and accomplishment.

> *I think we have to question our ideas.*[378]

In particular there continues to be a growing awareness amongst these teachers that their knowledge is valuable and valued and that they have a distinct role in contributing to art education. When I reported the final findings to the group and was asked what would happen to my research from that point onwards, I explained to the group that I was hoping to be able to present this research at an international art education conference in New York in 2002. I was delighted when three of the critical friends group asked if they could come and be part of a co-presentation. This indicates the enormous growth in confidence that the teachers have achieved through their engagement in this research. I can assuredly predict that these teachers would be unlikely to have considered attending an international art conference, let alone presenting a paper at such a venue prior to their involvement in this research. They now feel valid members of the academic community and capable of presenting their conversations in this standard of forum. Their decision to be part of the conference also highlights a breaking down of traditional dichotomies between the researcher and the participants. The accomplished teachers now feel a sense of ownership of the research and can accept the study as, at least in part, their work. Similarly, I am delighted that I can share the presentation of this research and any subsequent acclaim that may result from this with such a competent and committed group of primary art teachers. Furthermore, despite the official ending of the research, the conference presentation gives us a reason to continue to meet, something that the teachers and I have grown to enjoy and treasure. We started this project as researcher and participants and have finished as colleagues and friends.

During the research process the teachers reconsidered their positions in the research process and questioned ideas they had previously held. As the research progressed, the accomplished teachers became more empowered and confident to challenge each other and

the school and educational structures. It appeared that the opportunity to engage in a community of research gave the accomplished teachers a new voice. Bresler (1994: 16) notes, "the existence of a supportive "outsider" allows the teacher, who is typically isolated in the classroom, to voice and reflect upon his/her opinion, ideas and beliefs." They were invited to read the final document and several of the accomplished teachers did this. After their final reading we met together for coffee and the teachers made several comments in response to their reading of the study. These comments reflect the accomplished teachers continuing desire to enhance art education and the reflective manner in which they consider issues of significance to art education

> *I believe that students' creative endeavours are optimised in a stimulating, nurturing relaxed yet controlled environment. Into this environment, I impart knowledge and skills about the visual arts. Understanding of the students needs, patience and kindness all help to create a caring, creative, learning environment. This is underpinned by interesting programs relevant to the age group and of interest to, the age group. I aim to teach to the needs of each class, to be aware of the stage of development and impart appropriate skills and art appreciation for each grade.* [379]

> *I try to encourage students to be creative and push the boundaries of their skills, to take them to new levels of understanding and experience in media and appreciation.* [380]

> *I endeavour to nurture student's self-confidence through praise, displays of student work, peer assessment and evaluative tools. I believe that it is imperative to make students feel proud of their work that their work is important and of value and their work needs to be displayed for an audience to view.* [381]

> *Art has still got to be about personal expression and enjoyment. At the heart of it all is imagination... and I guess emotional response, pleasure. It is interesting though, now I have read all the analysis, I think it tells us even more about the importance of art as a communication... where we make shared meaning. Art is so important to contemporary society. Like the way we deal with social and cultural values. I think too where I teach, art is part of spiritual world... part of the beliefs of a community.* [382]

> *Art is about practice. You can't get away from that. It is about materials and techniques. Through exploration children give meaning and form to their ideas.* [383]

> *I sometimes question my role as a teacher. I think I have to be a motivator and facilitator. For some kids that is enough and they sort of fire off from there. But at other times I have to provide information, initiate ideas, demonstrate methods and techniques. But most important is a relaxed feeling, an atmosphere that is supportive and allows for the individual.* [384]

Art is a process… exploring, developing and resolving. It has to be done in a sequential manner. I still don't think you have said enough about that sequence. Like there is the sequence in the lessons, but what about how teachers will know how to more broadly structure and sequence a whole year's artwork. That is what teachers really want. Not me though, I think when you are experienced you sort of know. But students, beginning teachers. We still haven't got to that. [385]

*I believe students(*preservice teachers) *should be exposed to a variety of art and decide what styles and media they enjoy through evaluating the art they have seen. I believe that networking is a vital component of teaching at any age and being able to submit and access other teacher's ideas from all over the world is fantastic.* [386]

Positioning was highly dependent upon ideas of audience. The politics of the "look" could not be ignored. Initially the teachers were probably looking at me, while they rightly assumed I was looking at them. Our gazes then changed, until we were both looking much more at ourselves, and finally in the presentational stage of the research, we all seemed to then turn our gaze to the 'other' who would be likely to be reading this research. In this way notions of audience and the subject of the criticism existed in flux. Anderson (1993: 205) notes that: "It is not possible to exclude judgement from entering aesthetic perception, or at least from supervening upon that first unanalysed qualitative impression" As the gaze changed, the positioning and relationships between the participants in the research community changed.

Your research is important as it helps us as teachers educate families and other teachers as to the importance of art education as part of the curriculum through all levels of education. Advocate for the importance and relevance of art education across the educational curriculum. [387]

The research community represented a haven where personal beliefs and critical reflexions could be shared openly. This built a level of interdependence, trust and mutuality. All people in the study needed to feel involved in a meaningful and genuine way. As the gaze changed, the participants needed to still feel that their position in the study was appropriate and sufficiently meaningful to enable their continued involvement. This change was exemplified by the way in which the participants wanted to continue meeting and sharing ideas about art teaching, even after the formal 'gaze' of the research had been removed, and my purpose for the community as a space for conducting research had concluded. Key to the continuation of the research community was the expressed need the teachers had for professional networks and organisations. While through the course of the research the participants had accepted the mantle as accomplished art teachers, they expressed the view

that art teaching was a very isolated profession. In this way, the research methodology had an unanticipated benefit of providing a venue for these like-minded accomplished art teachers to gather and talk. As active lifelong learners, this was something they valued and were reluctant to lose at the conclusion of the research.

> *I loved the passion and excitement (present in the critical friends sessions) and the willingness of people to share ideas and experiences.* [388]

18.3 Lifelong learners.

Linked with accomplishment, was the passion displayed by the teachers to actively seek new knowledge and skills from a range of sources. They felt strongly that learning always continues. Ironically, the critical friends sessions served to address this need the teachers felt. At the conclusion of the first critical friends meeting, I noticed a number of the accomplished teachers remained outside and chatted about issues in their school and exchanging ideas about teaching resources and lesson ideas. The participants began to see that the research provided a venue for learning new approaches, hearing what other teachers were doing and exchanging conversations about art learning. A quality of accomplishment that became apparent was the desire they all possessed to learn new things. By the second session the teachers were bringing along learning materials and teaching resources to show one another and exchanging phone numbers and organising to meet additionally. Even after the formal conclusion of the studies, a flexible group of about twelve of the participating teachers continued to meet for coffee, to chat and *'bounce ideas off one another'* [389]. I have also noticed that they are actively seeking the critique of other members of the critical friends group. For example Tracey has begun writing an art book, and has sent a draft copy to other members of the critical friends group for comment. Rhonda and Sophie have also decided to enrol together in post-graduate art education courses. These findings indicate that accomplished teachers appear to need professional networks and contacts.

The actions of the accomplished art teachers that resulted from the research process also highlighted the need for universities to offer post-graduate degrees in art making and art philosophy for primary teachers. The accomplished art teachers commented that it was often only after you had been teaching for some time that you really began to appreciate the value of art in children's learning. They also felt that it was at this more experienced level

that accomplished teachers desired to understand more about the philosophical underpinning so their teaching. They have a passion for learning and seek to more clearly understand why they do what they do in the classroom. These findings indicated the importance of accomplished teachers also being active learners. This not only added to their understanding, but importantly fulfilled the need they have to be a part of a community of learners and teachers who share a passion for the value of art education.

18.4 Growth and changing

> Quilt making offers enjoyment in the process itself as well as pleasure in the finished product.
> (Laury 1970: 12)

It was interesting to note the way the teachers' attitudes and confidence to express their opinions changed over the course of the research. During the first critical friends session the teachers were reticent to speak. They would wait until they were invited to speak. Also, the younger and less experienced teachers tended to be quieter and defer to more experienced members of the group. By the second session, the critical friends had become quite supportive of one another. More experienced teachers such as Sophie, Ann and Jill would actively encourage and support some of the less confident members of the group to contribute their ideas. At the same time, my role as researcher became less dominant. I was able to stand back and the group operated as an autonomous community, conversing freely. By the time I visited the 9 accomplished teachers in their schools, these teachers were clearly positioned as the experts and I was the learner and a friend. By the closure of the formal part of the research, the accomplished teachers felt they were valid members of the research community and there was a blurring of the roles between critic and artists, researcher and participants. The accomplished teachers began to feel a sense of ownership of the research and to talk of the results of '*our*' research and the work we were doing '*together*'. This change of ownership appeared in their conversations at about the same time as they began reflecting on their earlier comments. It seemed that as the critical friends participated in the research process they became more informed about and began to question their own teaching and what they said about their teaching. As they did this, they were able to identify that they were speaking from a number of authentic voices within themselves. This was particularly true of Marion, who spoke in length in a conversation

after her school visit about the way the research had encouraged her to question ideas and how she had identified within herself conflicting and ambiguous statements.

> *I think art, as knowledge is really problematic. I can see after reading some of this stuff that it is important to think about this, but I am just not sure. I struggle with that, like 'What meaning should I be trying to convey? How much should I push making or appreciating? I really find I have to make choices and these are not clear-cut. I try to get the kids experimenting and discussing. That is important, for both adults and children. Critical appreciation. Problem solving… But should I give them knowledge? I don't know about that. What knowledge?[390]*

As the accomplished teachers thought more deeply and reflectively about their comments, they grew in confidence and willingness to acknowledge a level of skill and accomplishment. This observation highlights the importance of teachers participating in professional networks and teacher developments. The collaboration inherent to the research process appeared to encourage the teachers to develop their reflective powers and develop greater levels of professional identify and feelings of self worth. The critical friends sessions underscore the importance of collaboration, in stimulating teachers to analyse and evaluate each other's teaching. During the critical friend's sessions, the teachers shared individual thinking, and a collective philosophy developed about how they as a community of accomplished teachers might be able to assist in preservice art education. They felt that the critical friends sessions not only redress the isolation they felt working in the primary school, but also provided a collective opportunity to present preservice teachers with philosophies of art and teaching and examples of innovative practice, all within the context of realistic pedagogy and workplace constraints.

Another aspect of the collaborative research community that needs to be stressed is that the research community represented a place where the teachers could share their concerns and feelings. There is often a false assumption in primary education that a teacher's role is to serve the children and in this process the inner soul of the teacher or his/or her feelings are unimportant to professional practice. Teachers are encouraged to suppress their 'self' and little consideration is given to the emotional toll this takes on primary art teachers. I became seen as a supportive outsider who the teachers felt comfortable with to share their concerns, ideas and beliefs. This became a reciprocal process, as I found myself sharing with the teachers, particularly after the formal research process concluded, not only the

findings of the study, but also the concerns and problems I was facing writing up the results and balancing family life and teaching responsibilities with research. Several of the critical friends group became my supportive outsider! They became valued colleagues who helped me to clarify my thoughts and critique the representation of findings.   Through talking with members of the critical friends group I re-evaluated the findings and my expectations and beliefs about what the results of this research were likely to be. For example, while personally feeling that art making was a significant part of preservice art education, the accomplished teachers challenged these ideas and encouraged me to see the importance of art appreciation and significant visual moments as part of preservice art education. In this way, the research was a highly educative process for me and I hope also for the accomplished teachers. We all re-configured our beliefs and were challenged to reflect on the ideas that related directly to our respective teaching practices. Through the critical friends sessions, school visits and subsequent conversations and friendship, we have both had to explore our private reflections and reveal these in a process of public dialogue. This process was quite liberating.

Like the accomplished teachers, I feel I have gained enormous confidence and belief in my role as a researcher by engaging in this process. Furthermore, I feel I have made the link between my world as art educator, artist, teacher and researcher. These aspects of my life have at times seemed to be disparate, yet through this research I have been able to reflect on my experiences, to determine the importance of these experiences to my teaching and artistic lifes and form patterns that make connections between these various aspects. The conversations with the accomplished art teachers and the process of writing a dissertation have assisted in clarifying my value systems in relation to art, art education and research, and I now have the confidence to feel I can translate these into meaningful possibilities for preservice art education. While I think I did a relatively competent job of preservice art education in my university before I commenced this research, my actions and decisions were based largely on instinct and eclectic models of art education I had experienced. I now feel confident to review preservice art education within my university and to provide sustained reasons for the content and learning methods employed. Through the accomplished art teachers and my reflections I have gained practical wisdom into how art education values can be realised in practice within my university. In many ways I feel this process has just started. I have a palette bursting with fresh blobs of colour! I have a new

metal box of Reeve's pastels and a white canvas just itching to be flooded with colours! The joys and frustrations leading from this research are really only beginning.

While this process has been awakened by the conversations with the accomplished art teachers, I feel that the writing process has also contributed to this awakening. Through the construction of the narrative, I can sense how the words embody a sense of myself. A friend who read an early draft of the sections where I was describing the teachers' conversations commented that the stories they told could have been my story. A similar remark was also made after I presented some of this research at a conference. While authentically recording the teachers' conversations and using their words to tell the narrative, I realised that the story told were also essentially a story of me. Through the accomplished teachers, I have probed my early life experiences, my beliefs about art and the things I value in art education. In this way the text became an intermediary allowing me to reflect and continue a personal quest for an empathetic vision of my beliefs and the experiences of the accomplished teachers and myself. Diamond and Mullen (1999: 199) contend:

> Through writing, aspects of the self become more audible and possible. We invent and distinguish our voices through alluding to them as our self-representation.

For me this process was not linear. Meaning and a sense of self were often highly elusive and I often battled to catch ideas that would present themselves fleetingly and then dissolve into flux. Yet, on reading and re-reading the narrative, I realised that self existed in all narratives. The conversations had in totality lead to a new frame of representation. The patches and samples that had formed the quilt now had a pattern of their own. Within the completed quilt was a recognition of the experiences and inner selves of the accomplished art teachers and myself. The individual blocks existed alone, but together they formed an interweaving of personal stories that presented as a publicly accessible vision.

This does not mean that this was a single, completed version of self. The quilt in a way represented a holistic vision of who I am and what I believe yet this is perhaps only one version of me. I could unpick the blocks, reorganise the patterns, place the quilt in a new location and at each point I would be presenting other authentic versions of self. The language of the dissertation created a portrait of the accomplished teachers and me and

helped others to experience insight into the accomplished teachers and myself. My 'self' is not one thing. The self represented exists as a collage of myself as art educator, teacher, artist, mother, wife and woman. As a woman, artist and teacher my experiential location determines my understandings of life and the way I define myself in terms of these understandings. An art-based research methodology, combined with the immense support of the accomplished teachers, friends and family have allowed me to develop a greater understanding of self and level of maturity to feel confident in my ideas and beliefs and be prepared to take risks and reflect on these changes.

Art-based inquiry is a re-searching of self as knower and artist. It started with this premise and this idea continues long after the quilt is used on many beds to provide comfort and warmth and the threads begin to wear thin. The following section contains my reflections about the use of an art-based research methodology to conduct this investigation.

18.5 Critiquing the method

> The selection of design, the care in piecing, the patience in quilting; all make for
> feminine contentment and domestic happiness.
> (Hake 1937: 19)

One of the secondary aims of this research was to explore the way an art-based research methodology could be used in educational research. Specifically, I was interested to determine the manner in which artistic thinking could be used as a model of inquiry into the qualities of art teachers. This method was derived from the study of art, including art history and criticism. It was also based on the notion that research is an inherently artistic endeavour. These ideas were grounded in my experiences as an artist, art teacher and art educator. The belief was that research, like art, was inevitably idealistic and visionary. Similarly, research was a creative and non-linear process and like art, required flexibility, responsiveness and a fluidity of thought. When you create a painting you work with materials and as the work develops it begins to adopt a life of its own, speaking to you, suggesting the need for more red or touches of blue. Similarly art-based educational research implies that the research was not controlled, but rather it was about courting surprises and being prepared to take risks without always knowing where it was going. Matisse (1954: 21) argues that creation is the artist's true function and where there is no creation there is no art. Art-based research aims to shift research towards a more creative,

artistic form of knowing. It is grounded in artistic thinking and practice and it bears the artistic signature in terms of it cultural and historical links, its flexibility, doubt and uncertainty and the manner in which it relies on both community and audience. The art-based approach enacted in this research assumed that knowledge was creative, imaginative and situated in a context. This context acted as frames, governing both the conception of the study and the way it was presented and received. Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990: 11) contend that something is inherently artistic if it, "results from the process of expressing a formerly unformulated intuition" or the "apprehension of something that had hitherto been hidden and inaccessible to logical understanding." If this definition is accepted, the results of this research support ideas of aesthetic. The qualities of accomplished primary art teachers in New South Wales were relatively inaccessible. To present these qualities accurately required feeling and sensitivity beyond logical appreciation. Many of the findings and their applicability to preservice art education existed in my mind, experiences and self as intuitive understanding. I expected to find that the teachers were passionate and enthusiastic. I also felt I would find that the teachers largely ignored curriculum documents and enacted eclectic practices. What surprised me was the similarity with which the teachers spoke and acted and the importance of significant visual moments in their teaching. I was also surprised by the depth of their passion to enculturate children and the community with their benefits of art education. While many of these observations were evidenced in the recorded conversations of the teachers, the artistic aspect of the research process became most evident when I allowed feelings, sensation and perception to inform my consciousness and the way I presented this in a publicly accessible manner. Moments of emotional understanding enabled me to gain insight into myself and the teachers and it was at these moments that the overall picture of the study emerged, including its significance to preservice art education.

Art-based research proved to be in many ways a mysterious process. There were many layers of meaning that revealed themselves and hid themselves in a random way throughout the research. Diamond and Mullen (1999: 281-282) note of artistic inquiry: "It involves imaginative minds and excited bodies, cool thought and hot passion and personal and collective memories." These attributes were certainly apparent in the way this art-based research emerged. I particularly wished to highlight the manner in which a critical appreciative methodology allowed a community to develop that fostered the sharing of

collective meanings. The accomplished teachers and I became co-participants in the formation of understandings. I wish to deeply acknowledge the value of the participants and the knowledge they exchanged as part of the research process. Art-based research methodologies must honour the work of the artists and ensure that they are justly rewarded, in this case collegially and emotionally, for the value they add to an artistic research process. As a critic, I was privileged to be allowed to, through the imaginative contributions of the accomplished teachers, put myself in their place, empathise with their feelings, and adopt a stance allowing me to see their visions. While the accomplished teachers explored ideas about teaching and learning, I found I began to trace the origin of my ideas about art teaching. I was able to assemble, construct and reconstruct myself as teacher, artist, teacher educator and woman. I built new ideas and modified other ideas I had. I have largely to attribute this process to a creative research approach and the selfless participation of the accomplished teachers. Together we commenced the continuing journey of selfhood. The critical appreciative research approach enabled us to share our selves and our stories in a supportive context. This process served to affirm for us some of the 'givens' by which art teachers as a community operate. The conversations were also revealing as they foregrounded tacit understandings that we held but had previously assumed to be idiosyncratic. Furthermore, the enjoyment and fulfilment derived from engagement in the research process became a goal in itself. We all enjoyed the experience of participating in a supportive community of like-minded people and wanted to continue the social fulfilment provided by the process.

A significant part of the research process was also the manner in which interpretations were presented to the audience or readers.   In a critical appreciative research approach the critical , cultural and artistic aspects of what is seen are of significance. Words provide the major vehicle for presenting reality and organising the particular frame of reality that is presented. This involved unravelling the conversations of the accomplished teachers and presenting them in a collaged, quilted manner so as to provide insight into principles of practice that could form the basis of imaginings for preservice art education. This required an abundance of information from varied sources, imagination and the ability to present these in a way that enabled the reader to empathise with the patterns being presented. If this has been successful, the readers will share the dreams, emotions and ideas of the accomplished art teachers and be able to gain some warmth a comfort from the quilt

provided. The quilt should be strong and durable and be able to be used and laid in a number of contexts. The quilted representation of the teachers' stories attempted to present a vivid rendering of their experiences in a form that initiates discussion and sharing. The quilted view presented together form a quilt that is meaningful and aesthetic. It is based on an artistic rendering of assemblages of the original conversations to form something new and complete. The themes used in this critical appreciation were chosen to reflect recurring messages and messages of significance that pervaded the conversations of the teachers and had significance for preservice art education. These themes were the backing and quilting of the quilt. It was the use of themes that located the patterns within the blocks and stitched these together, making the qualities hold together as a single entity. It would be reasonable to assume that this patterning represented only one of a possible myriad of ways the themes could be developed and the quilt could be constructed. Yet I hope the quilt in its completeness offers a coherent picture of the qualities of accomplished primary art teachers in the New South Wales context.

It is hoped that the reader will be able to understand and in turn appreciate the presentations that the critic has made. This research was concerned with finding the patterns and searching for what was significant within a plethora of information. It intended to capture the essence of the conversations of the accomplished primary art teachers and reflect the human feelings of all involved and the impact of this on imaginings for preservice art teacher education. It will be judged as an appropriate method by its trueness to form, verisimilitude to the reality it purports to present, the depth of conversation presented, the passion and artistic vision with which it is constructed and ultimately the extent to which it engenders imaginings and catalyst in others.

It is my vision. Ultimately, the aim of a critical appreciative methodology is the manner in which it enriches the understanding of a work of art. If accomplished teaching is considered as the work of art, then the methodology combines sensation, thinking, feeling, intuition and intelligence in the desire to present a meaningful quilt of ideas. Part of this process has been a creative process of play and discovery. I found this to be an inseparable part of art-based research. Whether this process has been successful ultimately depends on the way the work is read and understood by an audience. The next section examines the role of the artist in determining the usefulness of the research method.

18.6 The reader

After a quilt is finished, the enjoyment of using it is still in store. No quilt should ever be made only to be put away and saved for someone else's use "someday". A quilt's beauty can be best appreciated when it is *in* use. The time, energy , care and patience you have expended in sewing a quilt do not flourish in a bureau drawer. The finished quilt is durable and useable and it has not fulfilled its purpose until it is also used and enjoyed. Only then does the work offer a deep and lasting sense of accomplishment.
(Laury 1970: 128)

Art exists in a direct relationship to the audience. To this extent, it can be argued that art-based research methods are not fully complete until activated by the visions of the reader. It is hoped that the reader will be changed and moved by the research. Ideally, each person reading this research will strike moments where they recognise his or her countenance in the stories presented. Furthermore, the readers will generate ideas and practices from reading the stories of the accomplished teachers and the application of these to preservice teacher education. The stories told in this research will be useful to art teachers at all levels and teacher educators including those beyond art education.

It should be noted that there is not a single way the research is to be read. Each reader will bring to the work their unique set of experiences and beliefs that determine the way the piece is read. Furthermore, an individual may read the work differently according to the point of time in which the reading occurs and their particular experiences and context at that point. In this way the readers are entering a discursive process with the research. Reading will be an act of negotiation between the teachers' conversations, my critical narrative and the reader's thoughts and feelings. The insights the reader gains will change as the reader changes. This is inevitable as meaning derives from the interplay of the challenges the work presents, the various experiential and intuitive frames applied to these challenges, and the goals and needs of the viewer.

Meaning is formed by many voices. This is inherently artistic as art is characterised by choice and readings. Csikszentmihalyi (1990: 147) notes that paintings can give the *illusion* that you can see them in a second, but that is just totality not reality: It takes a long time to *actually* see a painting. As oil paint on a canvas ages the oils mixed with the pigment gradually become more transparent. Sometimes this results in the audience being

able to see the original sketch lines of the painting. This process is known as 'pentimento' from the Italian, literally meaning to repent (Pearsall 1998: 1374) because old conceptions have been replaced by subsequent ideas. Similarly, it may be that while the research is so fresh it obscures some of the underlying thoughts and ideas that have led to its development. As the research ages it reveals new ways of seeing.

> Time use and wear enhance the surfaces of fabric as they do all other materials.
> Fabrics become soft, some colours fade, and there is a mellowing of the whole not
> unlike the patina on silver.
> (Laury 1970: 8)

18.7 And the journey begins.

> Dancing was the usual finish of the quilting bee. Many romances must have
> started at or following quilting parties.
> (Hinson 1966: 140)

When a quilt is nearing completion, the stitcher feels an immense sense of satisfaction. The work is held at arm length, shown to friends to be admired and there is a general feeling of a job well done. Yet after a short time, you begin to miss the comfort of a sewing box at your side, something to do with your hands, and you begin looking for new patterns and challenges. You gather more swatches of fabric, you begin to look at other places your quilt could lie or friends and family ask you to start sewing for them. The brief relief at completion is quickly replaced by the need to continue onto the next project. So it is with research.

I believe passionately, as I believed at the commencement of this research that primary children require and deserve highly competent and committed teachers who can induct them into the joys of the artworld. The work of this research has convinced me that there are some committed and highly accomplished teachers in New South Wales' primary schools. The accomplished art teachers indicated that it was possible to have exciting and innovative programs that introduce children to a lasting love of art. Similarly, I believe that the accomplished art teachers gave me enormous insight into the qualities that constitute accomplished art teaching and that these qualities provide guidance for the sorts of planning and changes that need to be undertaken in preservice art education. But having stated this, the research indicates that there is no single answer or curriculum that captures

the diverse and instinctive qualities that the accomplished art teachers possess.   The qualities of the accomplished art teachers are as much about magic, passion and the wow factor as they are about having a sink in the room and not having to assess children's art. Art education has no inherently right answer. Yet, through the accomplished art teachers it is possible to recognise achievement of quality practice at the highest standard.

Through a critical approach, I have been able to present and judge the qualities the accomplished teachers possess and to appreciate the import of the comments and actions of these teachers to imaginings for preservice primary art education. There is much that can be learnt from the innovative ways the accomplished teachers have coped with pragmatic and artistic problems of day-to-day primary art teaching. These findings bring forth ideas that can inform our experiences and the way we think about art education but there are no recipes that can be applied to distil or replicate these qualities nor can we develop a curriculum or text book that con be used to guide preservice teachers to becoming the perfect primary art teacher.   Artistic teaching results from a combination of skills, knowledge, experience and most importantly personal qualities. While I may wish I could instil every student in my preservice art courses with the passion, drive and love of children's art learning that the accomplished teachers possessed, the truth is that no amount of teacher education can ever guarantee the development of truly artistic teachers.

This research is a beginning. There are many areas that could be pursued as a result of these findings. The most urgent of these for me is to try and enact some of the recommendations made in relation to preservice generalist art education. Within the context of my university there are a number of changes I intend to trial. These include the provision of more visual opportunities, taking the students outside the lecture room and studio context to visit art galleries and other sites of interest and to encourage them to respond visually to their environment. I also intend to change the predominantly linear focus of the current program to consider web-like structures where the students select their own pathways and where risk-taking is inherently part of how learning is organised. I will consider shifting the current emphasis from mastery of form and materials to one more based around inducting the students into an artistic way of thinking and speaking. I think it is important to maintain some level of practical application, with a great deal of emphasis on drawing. I will also try to establish links with local art teachers, perhaps through an

online environment, to help induct the preservice students into the pragmatic issues of classroom management in art. This program may also help to assist the primary art teachers by providing a meeting place to address the level of isolation they felt. These changes will need to be carefully documented and evaluated and it is likely that the impact will lead to further investigations. Generally though, there will be multiple models that can be followed. The challenge will be to produce a preservice art education program that is broad and flexible enough to allow each potential beginning teacher to develop the particular range of abilities that will make him/her an effective primary art teacher. This is not the case of trying to produce clones of the accomplished art teachers. While much has been learnt from their conversations and the research presents a number of themes to inform preservice art education, any program of preservice art teacher education must at its heart aim to develop individuality, uniqueness and honour and encourage human variability and the development of personal style and traits. Preservice generalist primary art education is about personal development not merely the acquisition of skills. Feeling, emotions and critical reflections are vital to such programs. Preservice students need to be encouraged to develop a visual awareness. They need a concern and interest for issues in the world and a genuine love for working with children and bringing to children an enthusiasm for art. Eisner and Boughton (1996: 134) note that " teaching like other arts bears the signature of its creator", and the virtue for one teacher is not necessarily what constitutes virtue for another. Quality art teaching requires sensitivity and imagination. Art is a human endeavour that defies recipes, logical approaches, theories and models.

Linked to these changes for preservice art education there is a need to reconsider postgraduate programs for generalist art teachers. The accomplished teachers were clearly lifelong learners. They hungered for further learning in art in both a practical and theoretical way and would be assisted by the social contact provided by education. Current programs need to be evaluated in terms of the way they can more closely address the needs of primary art teachers. Higher degree programs need to consider ways where they can gain more appeal and benefit for master teachers. Such programs need to capitalise on the accomplished teachers' desire for continuous intellectual and creative self-improvement and provide a venue for reflective conversations. As the accomplished art teachers possessed an insatiable desire to learn more about art, professional doctorate programs need to stimulate a sense of belonging to an artistic community and foster teachers' artistic and

appreciative growth. All these courses need to highlight their relevance to children's art development as a major motivation for the teachers is awakening children to the wonders and joy offered by the art world.

The accomplished art teachers exemplified the level of commitment and professional expertise held by many primary art teachers. This is a precious resource and efforts need to be made to more actively involve primary teachers in all levels of educational planning and training. Furthermore, we need to ensure that primary teachers are given the respect and recognition they deserve. Further research needs to be conducted into how primary teachers can be more fully integrated into curriculum planning. The conversations of the accomplished art teachers highlighted the urgent need to abandon top-down mandated curriculum that disregarded the problems of the primary teaching context and were thus largely ignored by teachers in practice. In addition, research needs to be conducted into how primary art teachers can be more effectively used in the dissemination and diffusion of art education innovation and changes in the primary school. It often appears that subsequent groups of curriculum developers and researchers continue to reinvent the wheel in terms of trying to enhance primary art teaching. More research needs to be undertaken to determine how primary teachers can be used to ensure a greater take-up rate of changes. Associated with this is the need to change the view that each new curriculum or piece of research is seen to surpass what has gone before. The accomplished teachers showed that quality art teachers are able to simultaneously adopt the best from a number of theoretical and practical approaches. Research needs to look instead at policy as transition with innovations being viewed as dissolving and emerging phases that teachers can apply intuitively to their personal teaching contexts. Research needs to explore alternatives and aim to release imaginative new perspectives. Curriculum documents should be more open and allow teachers to make connections and experiment with ideas. They should provide new lenses through which teachers can plan, interpret and reflect upon the process of art education. The teachers felt strongly that primary art education remains a neglected area of research and that more research needs to be conducted into primary art.

> But there is very little written in primary art. People don't really seem to
> ever get to the writing stage. [391]

I was surprised and at times amazed by the overwhelming similarity between the thoughts and actions of the accomplished teachers. It would be interesting know to what extent these findings would be replicated in the accomplished primary art teachers of other cultures. It would be particularly relevant to study European, Aboriginal and Asian examples to see whether different artistic heritage and visual experiences resulted in different qualities in the primary art teachers.

From a research methodology perspective, I hope to continue to be able to apply artistic approaches to my future research. If researchers continue to publish in this methodology it will assist in defining the axioms of this way of inquiry and build a body of research that can be used to critically evaluate artistic inquiry.

I noticed during the course of the research that within myself I could sense a number of the characteristics present in the accomplished art teachers. Like them my childhood was a delightful mix of make believe, glue and scraps of fabric. I too discovered the joys of art at teachers' college and had less than memorable experiences of school art. I love going to galleries and often find myself staring at clouds or taking photos of peeling paint on old timber for the colours and shapes they present. I am passionate about the value of art education and continue to push for this cause within my university. With students of all ages I have been moved by the wow factor when they discover the joy of art for the first time. I have had kindergarten students to post-graduate research students return to see me to talk about the art experiences we shared together that they have never forgotten. I hope I maintain and nourish my enthusiasm for teaching and thoroughly enjoy the experience of being a co-learner alongside my students. Like many of the accomplished art teachers, I can generate art teaching and learning ideas from anywhere. I am a good planner and organiser and at the same time a dreamer. I love art and I love life. I often feel isolated as I work away in the basement art rooms of my large university. Unlike many of the accomplished art teachers I have my own sink and supportive colleagues and administrators.

I leave this research with a conviction that good primary teachers exist who are optimistic about being involved in art education. Researchers, teachers and preservice students need to work together to address the many challenges and opportunities opening to art education.

The imaginings resulting from this research have been presented as tentative and uncertain ideas. Time and forces beyond the constructs of this research will tell which of these ideas is magnified and adopted more broadly and which will be diminished. In undertaking this research I was inevitably commencing a painting that would ultimately always remain incomplete. One thing is for certain, there is room on an artists' palette for an endless number of colours. I leave this quilt and begin gathering swatches and friendships for the next blocks.

> One of the oddest superstitions that grew up around quilting was brought back from the Orient on the China Clippers. According to the superstition, only God could create a perfect thing and if a human produced an object without some flaw it would call the Devil and misfortune would follow. For this reason some quilts were made with a blue leaf, or a single green flower in the design.
>
> (Hinson 1966: 144)

19 Epilogue:

> Friendship quilts contain both sentimental and artistic value.
> (Hinson 1966)
> The finished quilt is then given to their mutual friend.
> (Pellman and Pellman 1984: 106)

By the completion of this dissertation three of the critical friends and I had applied to present a paper at the InSEA World Congress 2002 in New York. The paper was accepted and the teachers and I received funding from a range of sources to attend. We meet regularly for coffee and to go to galleries and I continue to see many of the critical friends group. Two of the critical friends have returned to university to complete higher degrees as a direct result of being involved in this research. The accomplished art teachers have arranged for me to present at a number of art network meetings and to organise a conference for primary art.

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I continue to have the support, love and encouragement of my husband and four wonderful children.

When the quilt is finished, the quilt must then be bound at the edges.
(Laury 1970: 127)

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1   Notes

Each patch is signed by its maker in embroidery stitching.
Pellman, R. and K. Pellman (1984). <u>The world of Amish quilts</u>. Intercourse, Pennsylvania, Good Books.

The following notes provide sources for all the quotations used from each participant in the study.

[1] Jan, verbal reflection following school visit.
[2] Jill, emailed reflection following school visit
[3] Lyn, noted reflection following school visit.
[4] Marion, phon conversation, following school visit

[5] Paolo, critical friends meeting two
[6] Marion, critical friends meeting one
[7] Ann, critical friends meeting one
[8] Rhonda, critical friends meeting one
[9] Melinda, critical friends meeting one
[10] Sophie, critical friends meeting two
[11] Jill, critical friends meeting two
[12] Melinda, critical friends meeting two
[13] Ann, critical friends meeting one
[14] Kay, critical friends meeting two
[15] Melinda, critical friends meeting one
[16] Paolo, critical friends meeting two
[17] Ann, critical friends meeting one
[18] Rhonda, critical friends meeting two
[19] Vicki, critical friends meeting two
[20] Melinda, critical friends meeting two
[21] Bronwyn, critical friends meeting two
[22] Rhonda, critical friends meeting one
[23] Rhonda, school visit one.
[24] Kay, critical friends meeting two
[25] Marion, critical friends meeting one
[26] Jill, critical friends meeting two
[27] Bronwyn, critical friends meeting two
[28] Paolo, critical friends meeting two
[29] Tim, critical friends meeting two
[30] Melinda, critical friends meeting one
[31] Vicki, critical friends meeting three
[32] Jill, critical friends meeting two
[33] Sophie, critical friends meeting two
[34] Tim, critical friends meeting two
[35] Melinda critical friends meeting one
[36] Hilary, critical friends meeting one
[37] Marion, critical friends meeting one
[38] David, critical friends meeting two
[39] Tracey, critical friends meeting four
[40] Paolo, critical friends meeting two
[41] Vicki, critical friends meeting one
[42] Melinda, critical friends meeting one
[43] Kay, critical friends meeting two
[44] Jan, critical friends meeting one
[45] Tracey, critical friends meeting two
[46] Bronwyn, critical friends meeting two
[47] Jill, critical friends meeting one
[48] Sophie, critical friends meeting one
[49] Vicki, critical friends meeting one
[50] Tracey, critical friends meeting one
[51] Fiona, critical friends meeting one
[52] Jan, critical friends meeting one
[53] Bronwyn, critical friends meeting one
[54] Tim, critical friends meeting one
[55] Jo, critical friends meeting one
[56] David, critical friends meeting one
[57] Jill, school visit, my reflective journal entry
[58] Liz, school visit, my reflective journal entry
[59] Rhonda, school visit, my reflective journal entry
[60] Rhonda, school visit
[61] Kay, school visit two

[62] Jan, school visit one, my reflective journal entry
[63] Hilary, critical friends meeting three
[64] Tracey, critical friends meeting four
[65] Jill, critical friends meeting four
[66] Melinda, critical friends meeting three
[67] Tim, critical friends meeting four
[68] Tracey, critical friends meeting four
[69] Vicki, critical friends meeting four
[70] Jan, critical friends meeting four
[71] Hilary, critical friends meeting three
[72] Jill, critical friends meeting four
[73] Tracey, critical friends meeting four
[74] Jill, school visit one
[75] Jill, school visit one, my reflective journal entry
[76] Rhonda, school visit one.
[77] Jan, school visit one, my reflective journal entry
[78] Jan, school visit one, my reflective journal entry
[79] Rhonda, school visit one
[80] Rhonda, school visit one, my reflective journal entry and Rhonda's comments
[81] Jan, critical friends meeting three
[82] Tracey, critical friends meeting four
[83] Bronwyn, critical friends meeting three
[84] Bronwyn, critical friends meeting three
[85] Paolo, critical friends meeting four
[86] Marion, school visit one
[87] Michelle, critical friends meeting four
[88] Kay, critical friends meeting four
[89] David, critical friends meeting two
[90] Bronwyn, critical friends meeting three
[91] Jan, critical friends meeting three
[92] Ann, critical friends meeting four
[93] Jo and David, critical friends meeting two
[94] Jan, critical friends meeting three
[95] Melissa, critical friends meeting one
[96] Hilary, critical friends meeting one
[97] Michelle, school visit
[98] Jo, critical friends meeting two
[99] Ann, critical friends meeting four
[100] Tim, school visit
[101] Jo, critical friends meeting two
[102] Tim, critical friends meeting two
[103] Kay, school visit one, and my notes from reflective journal
[104] Jan, critical friends meeting three
[105] Melissa, critical friends meeting two
[106] Bronwyn, critical friends meeting four
[107] Rhonda, school visit one
[108] Kay, School visit two and notes from my reflective journal
[109] Follow-up coffee conversation with Kay
[110] Tim, school visit
[111] Liz, school visit
[112] Tim, school visit
[113] Hilary, critical friends meeting four
[114] Jill, School visit and comments from my reflective journal
[115] Kay, school visit two
[116] Jill, school visit and notes from my reflective journal
[117] Marion, critical friends meeting three
[118] Marion, critical friends meeting three

[119] Tim, school visit

[120] Michelle, critical friends meeting four

[121] Ann, critical friends meeting four

[122] Marion, critical friends meeting four

[123] Tim, critical friends meeting four

[124] Marion, school visit

[125] Hilary, critical friends meeting four

[126] Tim, critical friends meeting four

[127] Tim, school visit and notes form my reflective journal

[128] Kay, reflective comment made over coffee following the second school visit

[129] Jan and Ann, critical friends meeting three

[130] Tracey, critical friends meeting two

[131] Bronwyn, critical friends meeting three

[132] Fiona, critical friends meeting four

[133] Vicki, critical friends meeting four

[134] Rhonda, reflective conversation over coffee at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, one month after the school visit

[135] Tracey, a comment made in a phone conversation, following her sending me some copies of her program.

[136] Ann, critical friends meeting two

[137] Melinda, critical friends meeting three

[138] Vicki, critical friends meeting two

[139] Ann, critical friends meeting two

[140] Tim, conversation over coffee in the staff room at the end of the day, following the school visit

[141] Tim, conversation over coffee in the staff room at the end of the day, following the school visit

[142] Jan, school visit one

[143] Tracey, critical friends meeting four

[144] Melinda, critical friends meeting three

[145] Melissa, critical friends meeting three

[146] Sophie, reflective comment over lunch during the school visit.

[147] Jill, notes from my reflective journal as I watched Jill teach during the school visit

[148] Michelle, comment made after school visit, as we packed away the art materials at the end of the teaching day. The comment was recorded in my reflective diary.

[149] Paolo, critical friends meeting four

[150] From David's story to the critical friends meeting, meeting two

[151] From David's story to the critical friends meeting,, meeting two

[152] David and Jo, critical friends meeting two

[153] Sophie, critical friends meeting four

[154] Ann, critical friends meeting four

[155] Michelle, critical friends meeting four

[156] Vicki, critical friends meeting three

[157] Melinda, critical friends meeting three

[158] Sophie, conversation and reflections following the school visit.

[159] Melissa, critical friends meeting four

[160] Melinda, critical friends meeting three

[161] Rhonda, discussion after school visit, notes from my reflective diary

[162] Tim, Kay and Marion, critical friends meeting three.

[163] MY journal notes, based on my school visit with Rhonda.

[164] Ann, critical friends meeting three

[165] Sophie, critical friends meeting four

[166] Michelle, school visit

[167] Paolo, critical friends meeting four

[168] Marion, School visit

[169] Tracey, critical friends meeting four

[170] Bronwyn, critical friends meeting three

[171] Jill, critical friends meeting three

[172] Melinda, critical friends meeting three

[173] Tim, critical friends meeting three

[174] Tim, critical friends meeting three

[175] Michelle, school visit

[176] Kay, school visit two

[177] Tim, school visit

[178] Jan, reflective comment made over lunch during one school visit.

[179] Hilary, critical friends meeting three

[180] Jan, reflection made in a phone conversation two months after the second school visit

[181] Fiona, critical friends meeting two

[182] Kay, school visit two

[183] Rhonda, critical friends meeting four

[184] Fiona, critical friends meeting four

[185] Bronwyn, critical friends meeting three

[186] The critical friends meeting three

[187] Tim and Jan, critical friends meeting three

[188] Michelle, reflective conversation at the end of a school visit

[189] Marion, reflective comment made at the end of a school visit, while we washed dishes together in the staff room.

[190] Marion, comment made at the end of a school visit as Marion sat jotting notes down quickly in a book on her desk.

[191] A reflective comment written in my journal after a school visit with Jill.

[192] Linda, critical friends meeting three

[193] Ann, critical friends meeting three

[194] Michelle, comment made at the end of a school visit.

[195] Michelle, critical friends meeting four.

[196] Diana, critical friends meeting three

[197] Jan, comment made in informal discussions after school visit.

[198] Marion, comment made in informal discussions after school visit.

[199] Melissa, critical friends meeting three

[200] Rhonda, critical friends meeting three

[201] Vicki, critical friends meeting three

[202] Marion, critical friends meeting four

[203] Lyn, note taken from my reflective diary written during the school visit.

[204] Tim, my note from my reflective journal during the school visit

[205] Jan, School visit, including comments from my reflective journal

[206] Vicki, critical friends meeting three.

[207] Hilary, critical friends meeting three

[208] Melissa, critical friends meeting four

[209] Diana, critical friends meeting three

[210] Bronwyn, critical friends meeting three

[211] Jill, critical friends meeting four.

[212] Melinda, critical friends meeting four

[213] Jo, critical friends meeting two

[214] Tim, critical friends meeting three

[215] A comment Tim made as I arrived for the school visit.

[216] Tim, school visit and notes in my reflective journal.

[217] Sophie, school visit two.

[218] Marion, school visit.

[219] Tim, school visit

[220] Jill, critical friends meeting four.

[221] Kay, school visit, my reflective journal notes.

[222] Jill, school visit.

[223] Lyn, school visit.

[224] Tim, school visit and reflective journal notes.

[225] Lyn, conversation following the school visit, in the presence of other members of the school quilting group.

[226] Vicki, critical friends meeting three.

[227] Ann, critical friends meeting four.

228 Kay, critical friends meeting three.
229 David, critical friends meeting two
230 Melissa, critical friends meeting three.
231 Rhonda, critical friends meeting one.
232 Ann, critical friends meeting two.
233 Vicki, critical friends meeting three.
234 Sophie, critical friends meeting four.
235 Vicki, critical friends meeting three.
236 Lyn, school visit and reflective notes.
237 Michelle, school visit and reflective notes.
238 Tim, school visit.
239 Tim, school visit.
240 Rhonda, school visit.
241 Vicki, critical friends meeting three.
242 Paolo, critical friends meeting four.
243 Michelle, critical friends meeting three.
244 Hilary, critical friends meeting three.
245 Paolo, critical friends meeting four.
246 Melinda, critical friends meeting three.
247 Jan, critical friends meeting three.
248 Marion, critical friends meeting three.
249 Diana, critical friends meeting three.
250 Jan, critical friends meeting three.
251 Jill, critical friends meeting three.
252 Melinda, critical friends meeting three.
253 Vicki, critical friends meeting three.
254 Jan and Melinda, critical friends meeting three.
255 Tracey, critical friends meeting four.
256 Ann, critical friends meeting four.
257 Jan, critical friends meeting three.
258 Jill, critical friends meeting three.
259 Kay, critical friends meeting three.
260 Melinda, critical friends meeting three.
261 Marion, critical friends meeting three.
262 Ann, critical friends meeting four.
263 Hilary, critical friends meeting one.
264 Paolo, critical friends meeting three.
265 Ann, critical friends meeting two.
266 Kay, critical friends meeting three.
267 Jill, school visit.
268 Kay, comment made after school visit one.
269 Diana, critical friends meeting three.
270 Tracey, critical friends meeting four.
271 Ann, critical friends meeting four.
272 Melinda, critical friends meeting three.
273 Fiona, critical friends meeting two.
274 Vicki, critical friends meeting three.
275 Melissa, critical friends meeting two.
276 Ann, critical friends meeting four.
277 Michelle, school visit and my reflective notes.
278 My journal entry, during the school visit one with Kay.
279 Ann, critical friends meeting two.
280 Sophie, critical friends meeting two.
281 Lyn, school visit
282 Michelle, school visit.
283 Sophie, Rhonda, Hilary and Tracey, critical friends meeting three.
284 Vicki, critical friends meeting three.

285 Sophie, critical friends meeting three.
286 Ann, critical friends meeting four.
287 Tim, critical friends meeting three.
288 Kay, critical friends meeting three.
289 Paolo, critical friends meeting four.
290 Ann, critical friends meeting four.
291 Kay, school visit one, conversation at the end of the day.
292 Sophie, reflective comment made to me over coffee, after the second school visit.
293 Tim, conversation over coffee in the staff room at the end of the school visit.
294 Jill, school visit.
295 Vicki, critical friends meeting three.
296 Marion, school visit.
297 Fiona, critical friends meeting four.
298 Michelle, critical friends meeting four.
299 Rhonda, critical friends meeting four.
300 Melinda, critical friends meeting one.
301 Kay, critical friends meeting three.
302 Ann, critical friends meeting four.
303 Rhonda, reflective comment made over coffee at the Art Gallery of NSW
304 Rhonda, critical friends meeting four.
305 Sophie, critical friends meeting three.
306 Kerrie, critical friends meeting four.
307 Kay, critical friends meeting three.
308 Rhonda, critical friends meeting four.
309 Marion, conversation following school visit.
310 Fiona, critical friends meeting four.
311 Marion, critical friends meeting three
312 Michelle, critical friends meeting three.
313 Sophie, critical friends meeting three.
314 Critical friends meeting three.
315 Critical friends meeting three.
316 Melinda, critical friends meeting three.
317 Rhonda, critical friends meeting four.
318 Ann, critical friends meeting four.
319 Michelle, critical friends meeting four.
320 Jill, critical friends meeting two.
321 Kerrie, critical friends meeting two.
322 Rhonda, critical friends meeting one.
323 Paolo, critical friends meeting two.
324 Diana, critical friends meeting two.
325 Melinda, critical friends meeting one.
326 Rhonda, critical friends meeting two.
327 Jill, critical friends meeting three
328 Melissa, critical friends meeting two.
329 Jill, critical friends meeting two.
330 Jan, critical friends meeting three.
331 Ann, critical friends meeting two.
332 Melissa, critical friends meeting two.
333 Jill, critical friends meeting two.
334 Hilary, critical friends meeting two.
335 Hilary, critical friends meeting two.
336 Melissa, critical friends meeting two.
337 Hilary, critical friends meeting three.
338 Ann, critical friends meeting four.
339 Melissa, critical friends meeting two.
340 Ann, critical friends meeting four.
341 Bronwyn, critical friends meeting three.

[342] Jill, critical friends meeting two.
[343] Tracey, critical friends meeting four.
[344] Melinda, critical friends meeting three.
[345] Rhonda, critical friends meeting four.
[346] Michelle, critical friends meeting three.
[347] Jan, reflective comment made at the end of a school visit.
[348] Kerrie, critical friends meeting two.
[349] Tim, critical friends meeting three.
[350] Tim, critical friends meeting two.
[351] Hilary, critical friends meeting one.
[352] Melinda, critical friends meeting one.
[353] Jan, critical friends meeting one.
[354] Marion, comment made over coffee, several weeks after the school visits.
[355] Jan, school visit and notes from my reflective journal written during the visit to Jan's school.
[356] Notes made in my reflective journal while on the school visit with Lyn.
[357] Jill, school visit.
[358] Marion, school visit.
[359] Rhonda, critical friends meeting three.
[360] Jan, critical friends meeting three
[361] Jan, critical friends meeting three
[362] Rhonda, comment made over coffee, following the school visit.
[363] Melissa, critical friends meeting three.
[364] Marion, comment made while washing dishes in the staff room at the end of the school day after the school visit.
[365] Jan, school visit.
[366] Jill, school visit.
[367] Lyn, school visit
[368] Kay, school visit.
[369] Sophie, critical friends meeting three.
[370] Jan, critical friends meeting one.
[371] Rhonda, critical friends meeting three.
[372] Michelle, critical friends meeting four.
[373] Bronwyn, critical friends meeting three.
[374] Sophie, critical friends meeting three.
[375] Melinda, critical friends meeting one.
[376] Sophie, critical friends meeting two.
[377] Paolo, critical friends meeting four.
[378] Marion, reflective comment made to me several months after the conclusion of the formal research phase.
[379] Ann, reflective comment after reading the final study
[380] Paolo, reflective comment after reading the final study
[381] Kay, reflective comment after reading the final study.
[382] Paolo, reflective comment after reading the final study
[383] Hilary, reflective comment after reading the final study.
[384] Rhonda, reflective comment after reading the final study.
[385] Rhonda, reflective comment after reading the final study.
[386] Jan, reflective comment after reading the final study.
[387] Sophie, reflective comment after reading the final study.
[388] Melinda, reflective comment after reading the final study.
[389] Sophie, reflective comment made over coffee at the Art Gallery of NSW, about six months after the final formal data gathering stage of the research.
[390] Marion, reflective comment after reading the final study.
[391] Paolo, critical friends meeting four.

2   Appendix

2.1   Copy of ethics approval letter

University of Technology, Sydney
PO Box 123
Broadway NSW 2007 Australia
Tel. +61 2 9514 2000
 Fax +61 2 9514 1551
8 February, 2000

Professor David Boud
Faculty of Education
MARKETS CAMPUS

Dear David,
-UTS HREC 99/81 - BOUD, Professor David; -BROWN, Dr Ian Brown r e   BAMFORD, Ms Anne -
PhD student) - "What constitutes quality art education practices in primary education? An examination
of current practices in primary education and the formulation of a model for future generalist art teacher
education"

Thank-you for your response to my letter of 17 December 1999. 1 have no hesitation in approving your
application on the basis of your response, as authorised by the Committee at its meeting of 7 December
1999. Your approval number is UTS HREC 99/81 A.

The NHMRC guidelines require us to obtain a report about the progress of the research, and in particular
about any changes to the research which may have ethical implications. The attached report form must
be completed at least annually, and at the end of the project (if it takes more than a year), or in the event
of any changes to the research as referred to above, in which case the Research Ethics Officer should be
contacted beforehand.

I also refer you to the AVCC guidelines relating to the storage of data. The University requires that,
wherever possible, original research data be stored in the academic unit in which they were generated.
Should you submit any manuscript for publication, you will need to complete the attached Statement of
Authorship, Location of Data, Conflict of Interest form, which should be retained in the School, Faculty
or Centre, in a place determined by the Dean or Director.

Please complete the attached (green) report form at the appropriate time and return to Susanna Davis,
Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, Broadway. In the meantime, if you have any queries please do
not hesitate to contact either Susanna or myself.

 Yours sincerely,

 Professor Ashley Craig
Chair
UTS Human Research Ethics Committee

2.2 Sample of critical friends transcript:

there are lots of exercises. So the children can take risks because it is not always having to be displayed.

Tim: It is sort of getting the balance right. Allowing the skills to develop beside creativity, so learning the skills but not so much that they (children) lose the motivation that they had. It is getting that balance right, so that the children are inspired but that they have something to work with. They have the skills to be able to do something. They are not being tied down to creativity, but just getting a balance is difficult because each child is an individual, so teaching everyone in a class situation is really hard.

Melinda: Yes, I tend to spend more time approaching individual (children) and taking and working one-to-one. It is hard, but I then say I am rewarded at the end of the lesson when I get 30 highly original presents from the children.

Fiona: A lot of primary teachers try to do an art lesson that lasts for half and hour. That is a big mistake. You have to try and build on something. Make the children realise that a piece of art can go much longer than one lesson.

Sophie: Teachers and children do not feel so threatened by art as a subject when they know there is no time limit on the end. So we might do one subject (theme) that lasts almost the whole term. We will go over to the next term if we are still not finished, because each part is so sequential that they start off with something quite small and end up with something quite large. We change mediums as we go along and if it is up on the board from the beginning to the end in bits and pieces of work, then they are not threatened as well, because the kids don't have to ask me all the time whee are we going. They can see, "Oh, he did that" or "That is what that person did." The things are all left on the board. I used to just put up the things for that lesson, but I have since learnt that if I leave it all up they can see the progression over the weeks and it frees the children up because they do not have to be o n that 'week 3' task or whatever. So they can quickly look up at the board and see where their work is placed. They know they are heading in the right direction and they don't have to go back and ask for help. So it is easier to get around the classroom more.

Kay: We probably work in a similar way. We have special art diaries for the older boys and at the beginning of each term we give them an overview of what is happening for the term. Because we have to finish at the end of each term we can't carry things over from one term to the next. But the boys know that if they take three weeks or 4 weeks to do what was planned for the first one or 2 weeks it doesn't matter, so they may end up with

2.3 Sample of journal page from school visits:

2.4   Copy